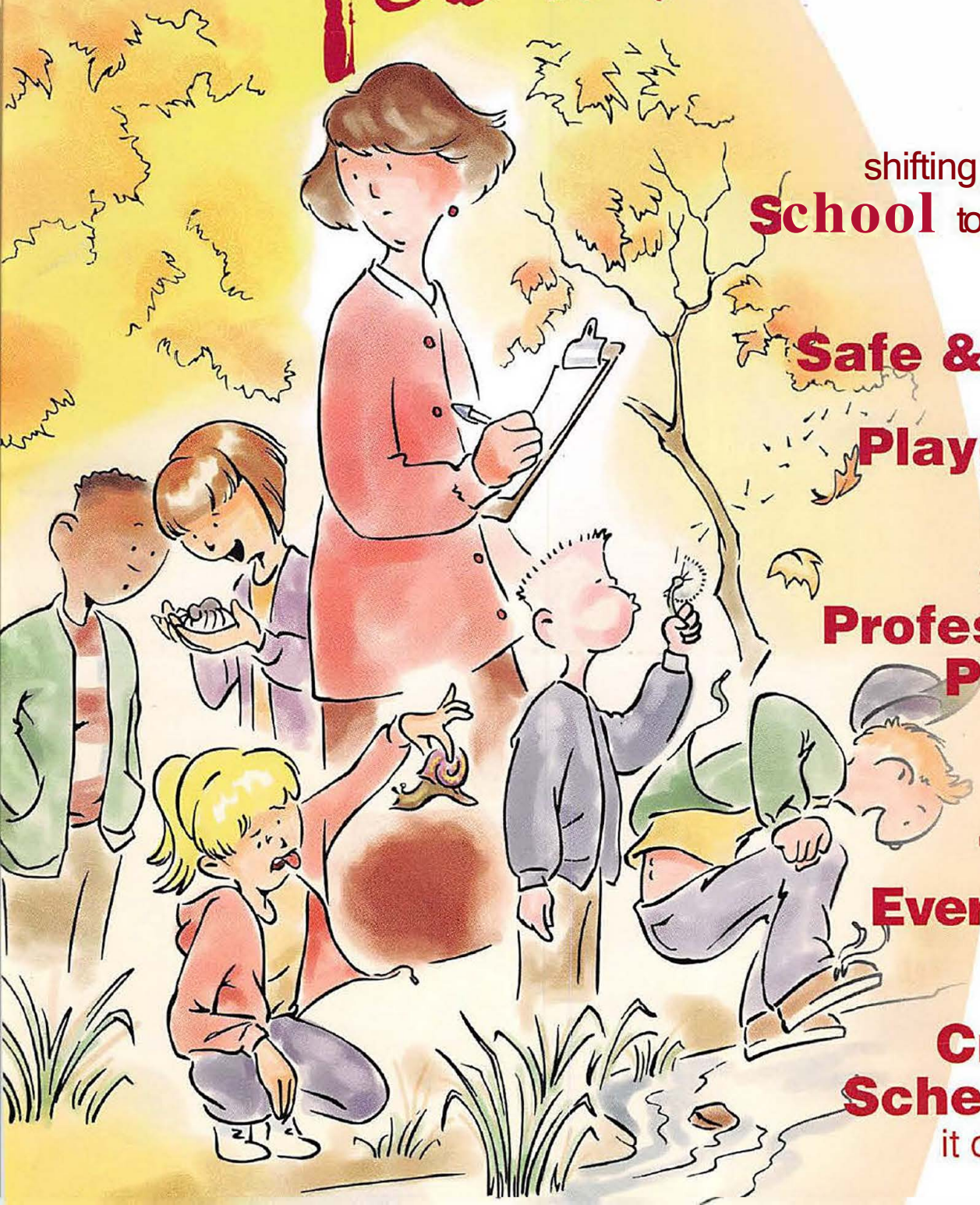
The Mailbox® Teacher

Fall1998
$5.95

The Education Center 25 YEARS

The Magazine For Those Who Love Teaching



shifting gears from **School** to **Home**

Safe & Sound on the **Playground**

tips for your **Professional Portfolio**

finding **Time** for **Every Child**

Creative Scheduling: it can happen

NEW
From The Editors Of *The MAILBOX*®

The Mailbox® Teacher

The Magazine That Connects And Inspires K–6 Teachers Who Love To Teach.

The Mailbox® Teacher
Back To School 1998
$5.95
The Magazine For Those Who Love Teaching
teacher-tested Discipline Tips
the Organized Classroom
the Scoop on Rubrics
Connecting with
Helping Hands
Tips for connecting with parents & volunteers
Open House Inspirations
First-Class Exhibit
Tips for Technology
Making the most of technology in your classroom
Congratulations From Cyberspace
Stars On The Small Screen
Jazz Up Your Class Newsletter
Tips For Creating Newsletters That Are Right In Tune
Getting Into The Rhythm
Taking Center Stage
Original Compositions

Your friends at *The Mailbox*® bring you another fine publication that connects teachers with the ideas they treasure the most—the ideas of other teachers!

In *The Mailbox Teacher*™ you'll find

- useful insights into current trends and their classroom impact.
- resourceful ways to handle everyday teaching obstacles
- insightful measures to take to *reach* children, not just teach them
- solutions for managing classroom time and stress

PLUS...inspiring glimpses into teaching's most rewarding moments and classroom anecdotes that strike a familiar chord.

Subscribe Today!

Call Toll–Free 1-800-627-8579 Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–11 P.M. ET

A one-year subscription is only $19.95 for 4 issues.

All non-U.S. subscriptions, add $6.00 postage and handling in U.S. funds.
Please allow 8–10 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

4LAA

The Mailbox Teacher™ is a trademark of The Education Center, Inc., and may be the subject of a federal trademark registration.

The Education Center® 25 YEARS

The Mailbox® Teacher

Fall 1998 • Volume 27—Number 2

25 YEARS

The Magazine For Those Who Love Teaching

Features

5 It's Time For A Share Fair! Come one, come all—come see your students show off their learning!

10 Top Cooperators Reward your students for working together.

16 Measuring Students' Success The ups and downs of deciding what students should be able to do—and why.

21 Gearing Down And Chilling Out Tips for making the shift from school life to home life.

24 Ten Things Every Teacher Knows The eternal truths are revealed: paper clips *do* chain themselves together at night!

26 One Good Deed Leads To Another! Good deeds plus good learning equal great service projects!

34 Sometimes It Pays To Think Out Of The Box Setting the stage for change at your school.

42 A Measure Of Safety A checklist to help you keep students safe and sound on the playground.

52 How To Give Every Child Individual Attention 20 simple suggestions. Try them today!

56 Sharing Your Classroom With A Student Teacher Make it a great experience for *both* of you!

Departments

3 Sharing Ideas And Contributor Form How to contribute your best ideas to *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine.

9 Special Moments Reminders of the real reasons we teach.

14 Helping Hands Tips for connecting with parents and volunteers.

20 Grin & Share It Glimpses into the lighter side of teaching.

30 Keeping Current Helping you stay up-to-date on trends in teaching. This issue: what is a *professional portfolio?*

40 Teacher Bulletin Board Post your requests here!

50 Tips For Technology Our subscribers' suggestions for making the most of the technology you have.

54 Reaching Children This issue: our subscribers' ideas for helping children whose parents are divorced.

60 Our Readers Write Classroom tips and timesavers.

©1998 The Education Center, Inc., P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. All rights reserved. Except as provided herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic or mechanical, without written permission from the publisher. Please direct written inquiries to the address above. Permission is granted to the original subscriber to reproduce pages for individual classroom use only and not for resale or distribution. Reproduction for an entire school or school system is prohibited. The Education Center®, *The Mailbox® Teacher,* and the mailbox/post/grass logo are registered trademarks of The Education Center, Inc. All brand or product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies. Printed in the United States of America.

The Mailbox® Teacher

The Magazine For Those Who Love Teaching
Fall 1998—Volume 27—Number 2

Publisher: The Education Center, Inc.

EDITORIAL:
Editor In Chief: Margaret Michel
Magazine Director: Karen P. Shelton
Editorial Administrative Director: Stephen Levy
Senior Editors: Karen A. Brudnak, Irving P. Crump
Copy Editors: Lynn Bemer Coble, H. Amanda Dixon, Karen L. Huffman, Jennifer Rudisill, Debbie Shoffner, Gina Sutphin
Contributing Writers: Phyliss Grady Adcock, Felicia M. Arnold, Helen Berkman, Laura L. Cannon, Terry Chadsey, Jean Wolf Kirschenman, Elaine Kurtz, Kathy O'Rourke, Rose Reissman, Karen Wilson, Douglas Wurst
Staff Artists: Jennifer Tipton Bennett, Cathy Spangler Bruce, Pam Crane, Nick Greenwood, Clevell Harris, Susan Hodnett, Sheila Krill, Mary Lester, Rob Mayworth, Kimberly Richard, Rebecca Saunders, Barry Slate, Donna K. Teal
Cover Artist: Nick Greenwood
Editorial Traffic Coordinator: Lisa K. Pitts
Type Systems Coordinator: Lynette Maxwell
Typesetter: Scott Lyons
Graphic Services Coordinator: Teresa Davidson
Editorial Assistants: Megan Bartholomew, Mickey Hjelt, Laura Slaughter, Wendy Svartz, Karen White
Librarian: Elizabeth A. Findley
Production Manager: Robert A. Stumpf

CIRCULATION:
Katharine P. Salovaara Brower, **Manager;** Andrew Cardman, Chad C. Secraw

MARKETING SERVICES:
Lori Z. Henry, **Manager;** Vickie Corbett, Jeannine Lorenz, Deb Printup

PHOTO CREDITS:

©1998 PhotoDisc® (unless otherwise credited)

HOW TO SUBMIT IDEAS

To be considered for publication, your ideas must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you want unpublished materials to be returned, the envelope must be of sufficient size, with adequate postage. Please print or type your name, address, school, and grade level on each page of ideas and mail to: Senior Editor, **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. You will receive a $20.00 gift certificate for each idea accepted for publication. All ideas must be original (developed by you) and submitted to only one publisher at a time. If accepted for publication, your name and school will be credited as the source. All rights (copyrights or otherwise) contained in the materials accepted for publication become the property of The Education Center, Inc.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE—including all orders, changes of address, etc.—should be directed to **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 54293, Boulder, CO 80322-4293; or call toll-free 1-800-334-0298. When changing an address, please allow six weeks' advance notice and include the old address (use address label from latest issue) along with the new address. Rates: $5.95 per copy plus shipping/handling, $19.95 for one year, $34.95 for two years in the United States. Add $6.00 per year elsewhere for postage. Payable only in U.S. funds.

The Mailbox® Teacher (ISSN 1098-5670; USPS 956-900) magazine for kindergarten and elementary teachers is published four times a year (Spring, Back To School, Fall, Winter) by The Education Center, Inc., 3515 West Market Street, P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. Periodical postage paid at Greensboro, NC, and at additional offices.
E-mail: mteacher@theeducationcenter.com
Internet Site: http://www.themailboxteacher.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 54293, Boulder, CO 80328-4293.

Printed In USA

The Mailbox® Teacher

Dear Reader,

Fall has always been my favorite time of the year. I'm sure this has its roots in my childhood: fall meant back to school. And after a summer of dawn-to-dusk farm chores, I *just couldn't wait* for school to begin!

Fall is also that time of year when there are so many holidays (a.k.a. breaks from teaching!), carnivals and festivals, the first chill in the air, the smell of wood burning in fireplaces. And it's also the time when you're over the back-to-school hump and into some serious teaching. You know your students, and they know you. You're into a flow, a groove. You know what the year is going to be like…and you're pretty comfortable and satisfied with the busyness of it all.

In this issue of *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine, you'll find plenty of inspiration, motivation, and celebration to lighten your busy days—all shared by your teaching colleagues from across the nation. This issue is packed with lots of practical tips for promoting a spirit of community in your classroom and school; solutions to help you better manage classroom time and stress; suggestions on how to enrich and sustain relationships; resourceful ways to handle everyday teaching obstacles; insightful measures to help you *reach* children, not just *teach* them; plus humorous stories and first-person accounts of teaching's most rewarding moments.

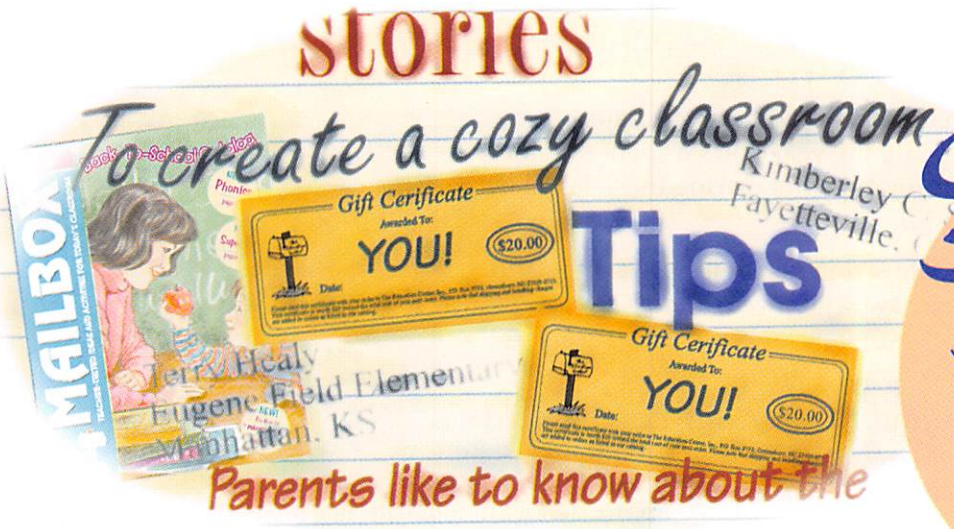
So take a few minutes to relax and look us over. And when one of *your* favorite ideas or anecdotes comes to mind, be sure to jot it down and send it to us (see "Sharing Ideas" on pages 3 and 4). Then we'll share it with our coast-to-coast network of readers.

We welcome you to our ever-growing group of *Mailbox* teachers!

Sincerely,

Irving P. Crump

Irving P. Crump
Senior Editor



Sharing Ideas

We'd Like To Hear From You!

Contribute your ideas for upcoming issues of *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine. We're looking for your best teacher-tested tips and first-person stories. For each idea accepted, you'll receive a **$20 gift certificate** for products from The Education Center, Inc. (Call 1-800-714-7991 to request a free catalog.) When your idea is published, you'll also receive a complimentary copy of the magazine in which it appears.

How to contribute your best ideas to *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine

Please tell us how you...

get dads involved. What unique strategies do you use to help dads feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom?

create a cozy classroom. Share the quick-and-easy ways that you turn your classroom into an inviting place of learning. How do you create interesting and effective student desk arrangements, no-hassle learning centers, cozy reading nooks, and other special spots? If possible, include photos!

know you're doing a good job. How do you evaluate yourself as a teacher? What are the signs that things are going well—or that it's time for a course correction?

work effectively with your aide. Share your tips for forming a productive partnership.

say no. It's easy to get in over your head by joining (or getting drafted for!) committees or being involved with too many special projects and other extracurricular activities. How do you keep your life in balance by sometimes saying no?

minimize noise in the classroom. How do you keep your classroom's noise at a minimum and learning at a maximum?

beat school-related stress. What helps you and your colleagues stay motivated?

deal with the early birds. Share your ideas for keeping those students who arrive at school early busy and productive.

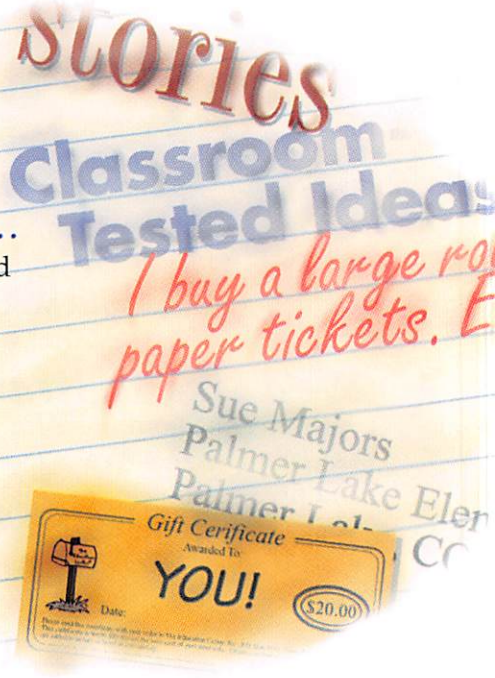
plan a schoolwide project. What schoolwide activities have been most successful for you? What were the keys to success?

answer kids' tricky questions. You've heard them all—"How much money do you make?" or "Why is Mr. Griffin a different color than I am?" Share the tricky questions *your* students have asked—and your answers.

continued ☛

end the year with a bang. What do you and your students or you and your colleagues do to celebrate the year you've spent together? How do you simply have some fun together during those last days of school? *(ideas due by October 30)*

plan for a rewarding summer. How do you combine learning and fun so you're revitalized for the new school year? *(ideas due by October 30)*



Please share your ideas and tips for our departments...

Helping Hands—How do you establish good rapport with parents and volunteers to get them involved in your classroom?

Tips For Technology—How does your computer help you save time and teach more creatively? What are your favorite Web sites (ones that *you* use, not ones your students use)?

Reaching Children—How do you help the gifted child, the loner, the unmotivated child, or the new student?

Our Readers Write—Share your tried-and-true time-management tips, ideas for jazzing up your classroom, and tips for saving money.

Special Moments—In a few paragraphs, describe an experience that reminded you of why you love teaching.

Grin And Share It!—Kids say and do the funniest things! Tell us your favorite anecdote.

Simply photocopy the form below. Jot down your best ideas—each on a separate form. Then follow the directions in "How To Submit Ideas" on page 2. ●

The Mailbox® Teacher Magazine Contributor Form

Name: _____

Home Address: _____
(city) (state) (zip)

School: _____

School Address: _____
(city) (state) (zip)

Name Of Idea: _____

Description Of Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please continue on the back of this form if necessary.

Mail to: Senior Editor, *The Mailbox® Teacher*, P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753.

If you prefer, you can **fax** your ideas to us at 336-547-1590, Dept. TMT, or **e-mail** them to mteacher@theeducationcenter.com.

Looking for a new approach to showcase your students' work? Try a "share fair"! A *share fair* is like a concert, but instead of performing music, students "perform" math, science, reading, social studies, and writing. The regular classroom curriculum is presented in plays, demonstrations, skits, and readers' theater; it's also displayed in exhibits, artwork, and dioramas.

In other words, a share fair is like an academic concert!

It's Time For A Share Fair

A Unique Approach To Sharing Your Students' Academic Talents

by Douglas Wurst
University Of Northern Colorado Laboratory School, Greeley, CO

Why Showcase Your Students With A Share Fair?

- Parents love to watch their children perform. When they see the quality of what their children are learning—and how they are learning—parents are more likely to support you and your programs.
- A share fair motivates students to learn. They want to perform well.
- Every time students rehearse for a share fair, curriculum is being reinforced. In fact, many researchers believe that students learn more easily and deeply when facts and skills are learned in context. A share fair provides that context.
- You can also authentically assess students as they rehearse for a share fair. A student's ability to apply facts and skills is assessed in productions of readers' theater, in the presentation of original plays, and in the demonstration of science experiments.

continued

What Kinds Of Formats Can You Use?

A share fair can be presented in a variety of formats, depending on your curriculum. Examples include the following:

- a science unit: Students perform experiments.
- a community workers unit: Students portray hospital workers, fire personnel, bankers, cooks, grocery workers, etc.
- a story-writing unit: Students share their published stories through reading and acting.

The share fair can be presented in a concert format, like the examples above, or in an open-house format. The open-house format is one in which students' work samples are on display and parents visit as they please within a specified time.

Below are more examples of curriculum-related share fairs. They're also some of my students' favorites!

- **A Patriotic Celebration** for a unit on United States government. Students say the Pledge Of Allegiance; sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America The Beautiful," and "Yankee Doodle"; and present short plays about important historical events. One such play, *How A Bill Becomes A Law,* includes one student portraying a *bill* while others are *legislators, judges,* and the *president.*

- **A Marketplace** for an economics unit. Students sell products that they make. They learn economic principles throughout the unit as they design and create these products. Parents are particularly pleased to see their children count and make change.

- **Bodies Of Knowledge** for a unit on the human body. This fair includes the following:
  —singing the scientific names of the bones to the tune of "Dem Bones"
  —showing how the blood circulates as students (dressed in red and blue to represent *veins* and *arteries*) walk on a large diagram of the human body
  —demonstrating the immune system with students portraying *T cells, antibodies,* and *viruses* in a battle for a person's good health
  —showing how the digestive system works with various students representing the *mouth, esophagus, stomach, intestines,* and one student as a piece of food. The "student-morsel" explains each part of the system as she makes her way through it.

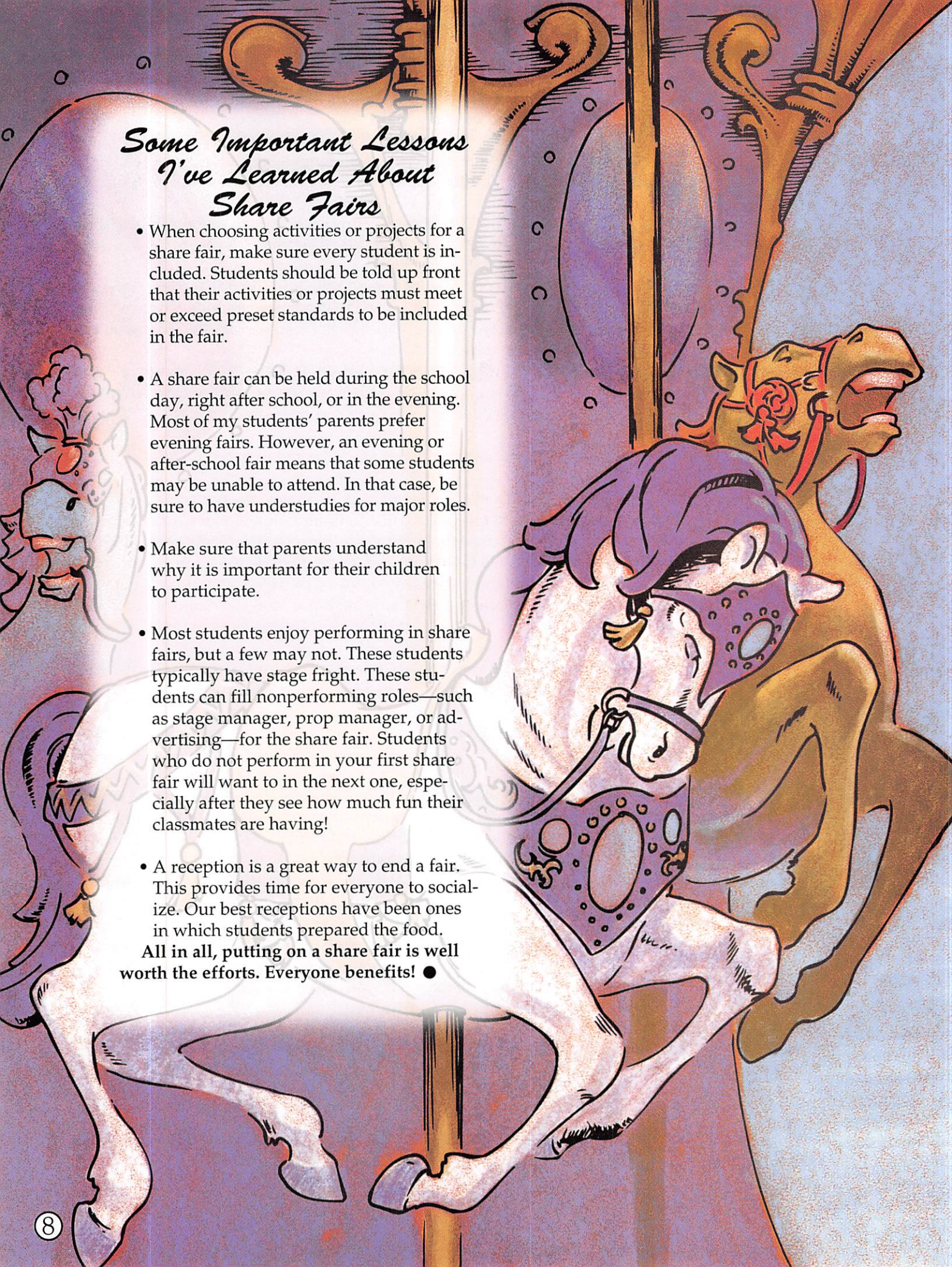
- **A Tech Trek** for a unit on inventions. This fair is presented in the style of the Academy Awards®. Instead of best-actor awards, these awards honor "The Best Inventions In History." Each student accepts an award by sharing a brief history of the invention or by presenting a scene from the life of its inventor.

- **A Diversity Potluck** for a unit on diversity. Parents, with the help of their children, prepare ethnic foods for this fair. While parents sample the foods, students perform songs and dances from around the world.

12 Easy Steps For Holding A Successful Share Fair

- ☐ 1. Get approval from your administrator.
- ☐ 2. Select a unit. Decide on activities for teaching the unit—ones that can potentially be presented at the share fair. The activities for the fair should last about an hour.
- ☐ 3. Select a date for the fair. Make sure there are no conflicts with other school activities. Note the share-fair date on your schoolwide calendar.
- ☐ 4. Create a flyer and send it to parents announcing the fair. Include its date, time, and location, and the benefits of their child's participation. Also include a return slip so that parents can let you know if their children will be able to attend. Then you can assign major acting roles to those students.
- ☐ 5. Begin rehearsals. This is easy because the activities are ones you're using to teach the unit. Also remember to collect finished work samples and projects.
- ☐ 6. About two weeks before the fair, send a reminder home to parents.
- ☐ 7. About one week before the fair, decide which activities you want to include. Remember that you can also display artwork and other tangible work, such as published stories, dioramas, lab reports, math work, etc. Have students perform the entire fair each day. If you want a printed program, include the name of your fair, the date, each activity that will be presented, the names of your students, your name and grade level, the name of your administrator, and the name of your school and district.
- ☐ 8. The day before the fair, have students prepare the food for the reception after the share fair. If you don't have access to a stove, choose simple no-cook recipes.
- ☐ 9. On the day of the share fair, have a dress rehearsal in the same place in which the fair will be presented.
- ☐ 10. Right before the fair, check the props (or have a student do this), and make sure anything electrical is working! Have a student or parent volunteer set out the food for the reception. Acknowledge your administrator if he or she is in attendance, and thank everyone who helped you with the fair.
- ☐ 11. At the end of the share fair, thank everyone for coming. Ask them to give you written feedback and comments. Also ask for volunteers to help you clean up after the reception. Then socialize and enjoy the reception.
- ☐ 12. In the next few days, evaluate the fair with your students. Ask what went well and what should be done differently the next time.

continued ☞



Some Important Lessons I've Learned About Share Fairs

- When choosing activities or projects for a share fair, make sure every student is included. Students should be told up front that their activities or projects must meet or exceed preset standards to be included in the fair.

- A share fair can be held during the school day, right after school, or in the evening. Most of my students' parents prefer evening fairs. However, an evening or after-school fair means that some students may be unable to attend. In that case, be sure to have understudies for major roles.

- Make sure that parents understand why it is important for their children to participate.

- Most students enjoy performing in share fairs, but a few may not. These students typically have stage fright. These students can fill nonperforming roles—such as stage manager, prop manager, or advertising—for the share fair. Students who do not perform in your first share fair will want to in the next one, especially after they see how much fun their classmates are having!

- A reception is a great way to end a fair. This provides time for everyone to socialize. Our best receptions have been ones in which students prepared the food.

All in all, putting on a share fair is well worth the efforts. Everyone benefits! ●

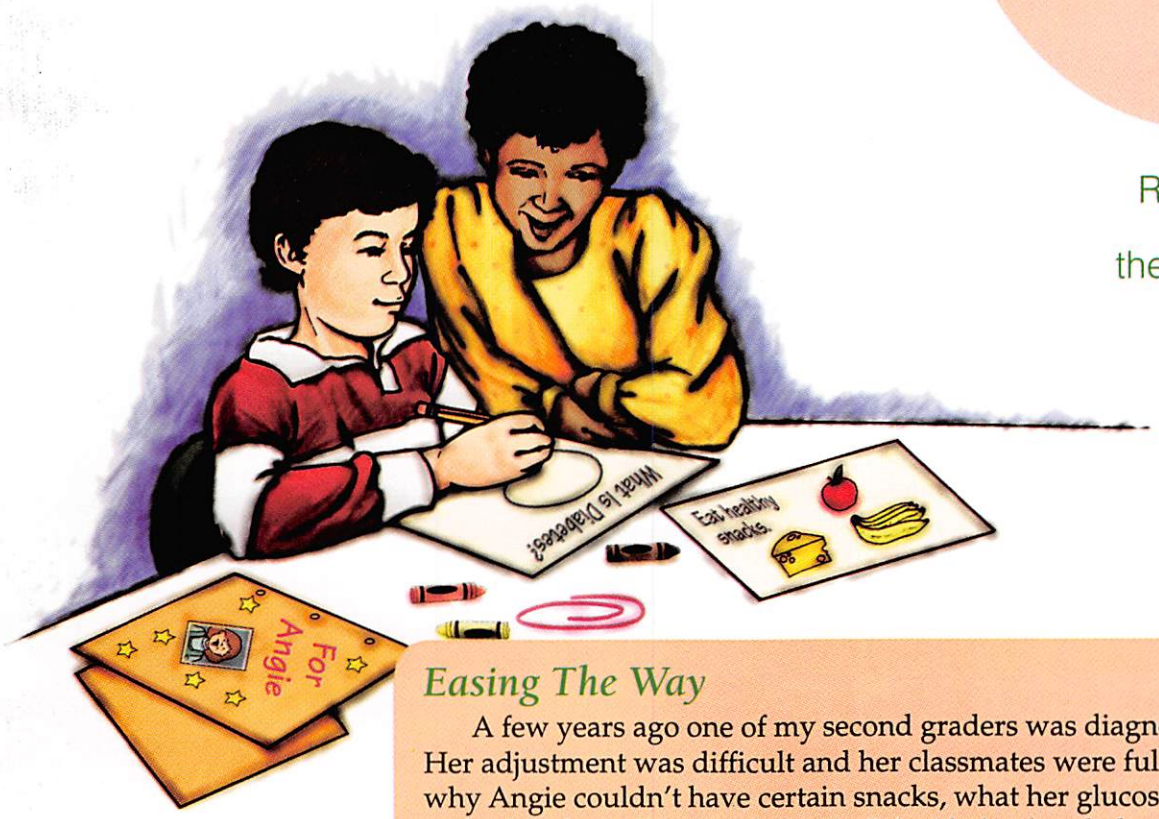
Special Moments

Reminders of the real reasons we teach

Because We Care

My grandmother died over Christmas break last year. When my students and I returned to school, the main topic of discussion was what everyone did during the break. When one student asked what I did, I briefly told him about my grandmother's death. He said that he was sorry and left it at that. But after thinking about it, he came over to me later and said with great sincerity, "I hope you don't ever die because we would miss you." His comment touched my heart!

—Melissa McKown, Ringgold Elementary School, Ringgold, GA



Easing The Way

A few years ago one of my second graders was diagnosed with diabetes. Her adjustment was difficult and her classmates were full of questions about why Angie couldn't have certain snacks, what her glucose monitor did, and so forth. After talking with Angie, I decided to break the class into groups to investigate the questions; we then wrote and illustrated a class book explaining the answers. The students—and particularly Angie—learned a lot. I felt good knowing that we'd all helped make a difficult situation a little easier for a student we cared about.

—Susan Kornatowski, West Leyden Elementary School, West Leyden, NY

The Best Thing I've Heard All Year...

Sometimes we can't help but wonder whether what we're doing is making a difference for our students. My dedication was reaffirmed after talking with Joseph's mother: "Joseph has always hated school," she told me. "But this year he can't wait to get there. One morning when we were running late, he told me, 'Mom, my teacher does the neatest things to make us learn, and I really need to be there. So let's hurry!' " This made her day—and my year!

—Louise Webb, Antioch Christian Academy, Oklahoma City, OK

Top Cooperators

A Motivational Program That Focuses On *Relationships*

by Kathy O'Rourke, Jackson, NJ

How can you turn your independent "superstars" into a classroom full of "top cooperators"? Read on to find out about a creative, motivational program that stresses cooperation!

Cooperative Learning... Still The Big Deal!

Educators agree: cooperative learning promotes success at every academic level. But how can you develop a motivational incentive program that supports and encourages cooperative-learning styles?

Skills such as *cooperation, compromise, encouragement,* and *flexibility* are important. A program like Top Cooperators promotes those skills! Top Cooperators recognizes that the best learning teams are made up of students who work together well—not only in the classroom, but also in the library and gym, and on the bus and playground as well. Top Cooperators targets skills necessary for *cooperative living*—and assumes that *cooperative learning* will follow.

How To Develop A Top Cooperators Program

Parents, students, teachers, and administrators: all are key players in the development of a TC program. The first step these players need to take is to set goals for the program. One school adopted the following goals for its schoolwide program:

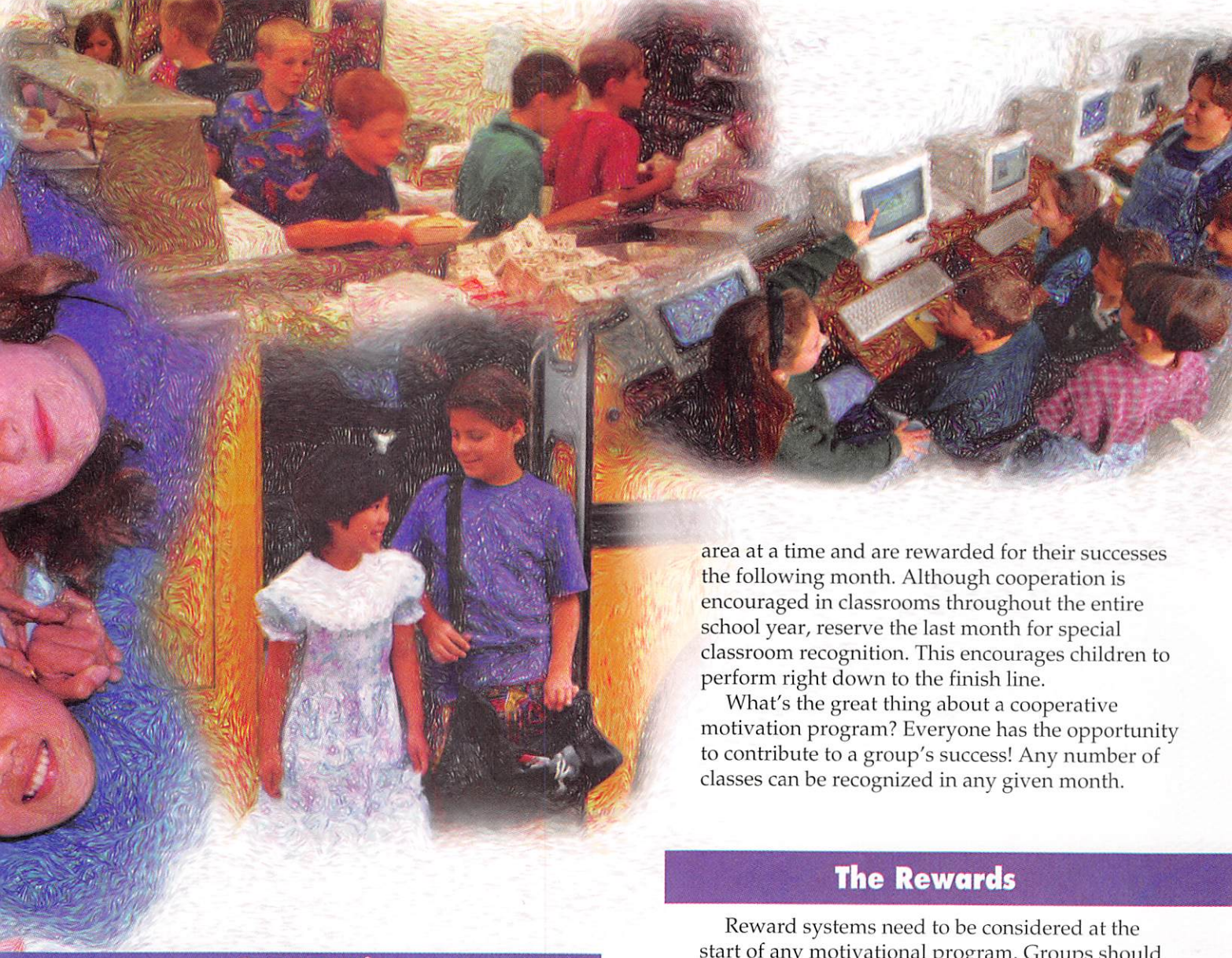
- Respect and get along with everyone.
- Use good manners at all times.
- Show patience and a willingness to help.
- Work well together.
- Do your own best work.
- Respect and care for your own property and the property of others.
- Follow all rules.

Middle-school goals, of course, will stress personal responsibility and peaceable conflict resolution.

Put The Program Into Action

The following are helpful hints for beginning a new program:

- Concentrate on appropriate social skills while students learn to work in groups.
- To build students' confidence, keep cooperative activities short and easy at first.
- Give positive feedback to any student who contributes to group success.
- Accept—and stress to students—the fact that problems arise within any group of people who work together.
- Assist students in resolving conflicts peaceably and productively.
- Adjust groups until each member feels valuable and functions well.
- Hold celebrations when groups successfully demonstrate a social skill.



Cooperation: Don't Leave The Classroom Without It!

Some students understand cooperative techniques better when they have chances to experiment with them in art, at lunch, or on the playground. Develop a yearlong, schoolwide schedule so that successful cooperative groups can be identified in a variety of settings. Here's such an example:

- September: guidance
- October: gym
- November: art
- December: music
- January: cafeteria
- February: media center
- March: school bus
- April: playground
- May: common areas (hallways, etc.)
- June: classroom

Such a program stresses to all staff—teachers, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc.—clear and uniform expectations for students. Students focus on expectations in one specific area at a time and are rewarded for their successes the following month. Although cooperation is encouraged in classrooms throughout the entire school year, reserve the last month for special classroom recognition. This encourages children to perform right down to the finish line.

What's the great thing about a cooperative motivation program? Everyone has the opportunity to contribute to a group's success! Any number of classes can be recognized in any given month.

The Rewards

Reward systems need to be considered at the start of any motivational program. Groups should be awarded

- tangible incentives, such as special buttons, badges, visors, or snacks
- special privileges, such as outings and recreational activities

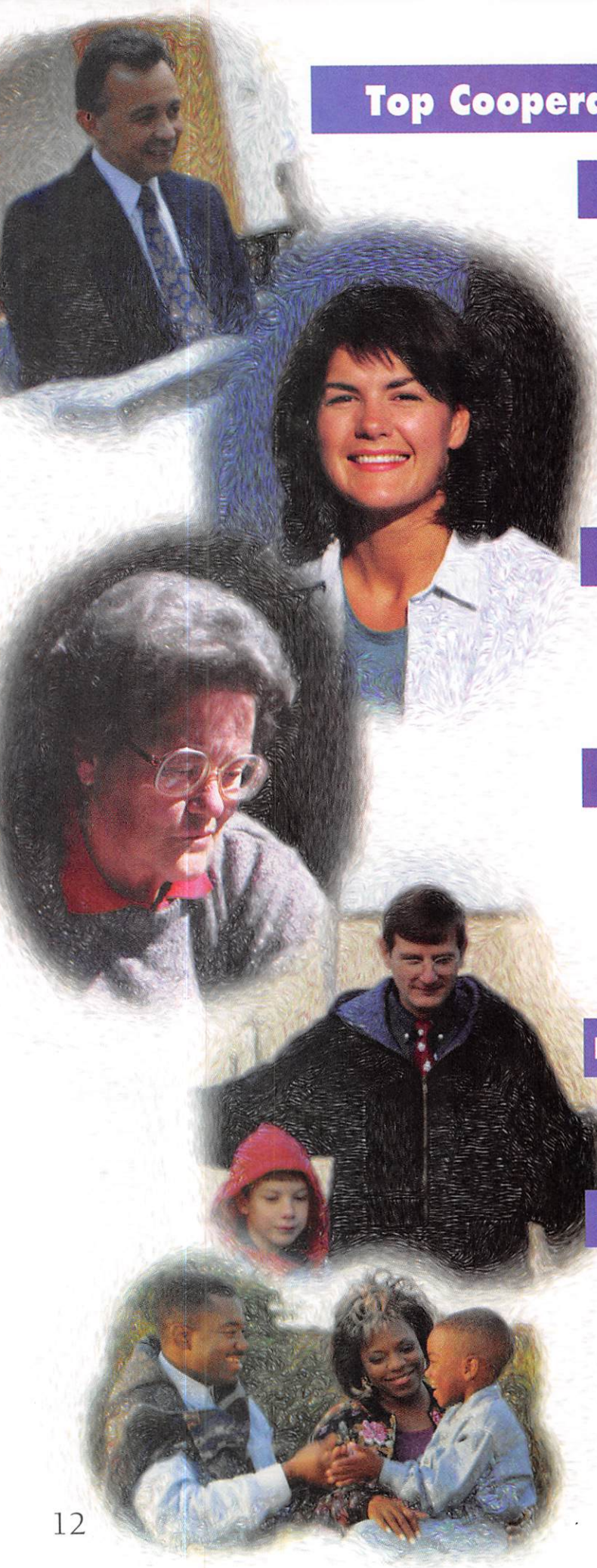
Successful classes should be acknowledged each month with

- announcements over the school's public-address system
- recognition on a schoolwide bulletin board
- special pennants to display

A group that is unable to meet performance standards for a particular month should receive feedback from the staff member who selects successful teams. Some teams may need special coaching and daily—even hourly!—reinforcement.

If the entire school attains Top Cooperator status, a very special celebration should be planned. One school staged a schoolwide magic show during which the principal disappeared!

continued



Top Cooperators: It's A Team Effort!

The Principal Is The Captain

The principal is the key player in a cooperative motivational program. He or she

- sets the tone for the entire cooperative atmosphere of the school
- can spark success by enthusiastically supporting a new program
- can set a wonderful example by fostering collaborative activities—and participating in them
- is uniquely able to structure exciting programs and to ensure adequate recognition for monthly success

Teachers Are The Cocaptains

Combine groups of kids and teach cooperatively. Students are then inspired by two or more unique role models. And you're encouraged, stimulated, and inspired—which can only come from working together with a special colleague.

Kick Off With Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors explain and kick off programs early in the year during group guidance lessons. They also help generate and maintain enthusiasm throughout the year. Counselors are especially effective when they use guidance lessons, group sessions, and lunch or playground times to introduce cooperative tasks that build trust and stimulate positive outcomes.

Physical Educators Promote Team Spirit

P.E. instructors naturally promote team spirit. They foster recreational fun and camaraderie when they stress cooperative games rather than competitive ones.

And Don't Forget The "Home Team"!

Skills that children acquire in a cooperative motivational program usually go home with them. So parents willingly lend their support. Parents quickly adopt the language of the program at home: "I need some Top Cooperators to help clean up the den!" It's also helpful to send news bulletins home on a regular basis in order to promote and celebrate successes.

The Big Winners: CHILDREN

Children gain many benefits from participating in a cooperative motivational program. Socially successful kids

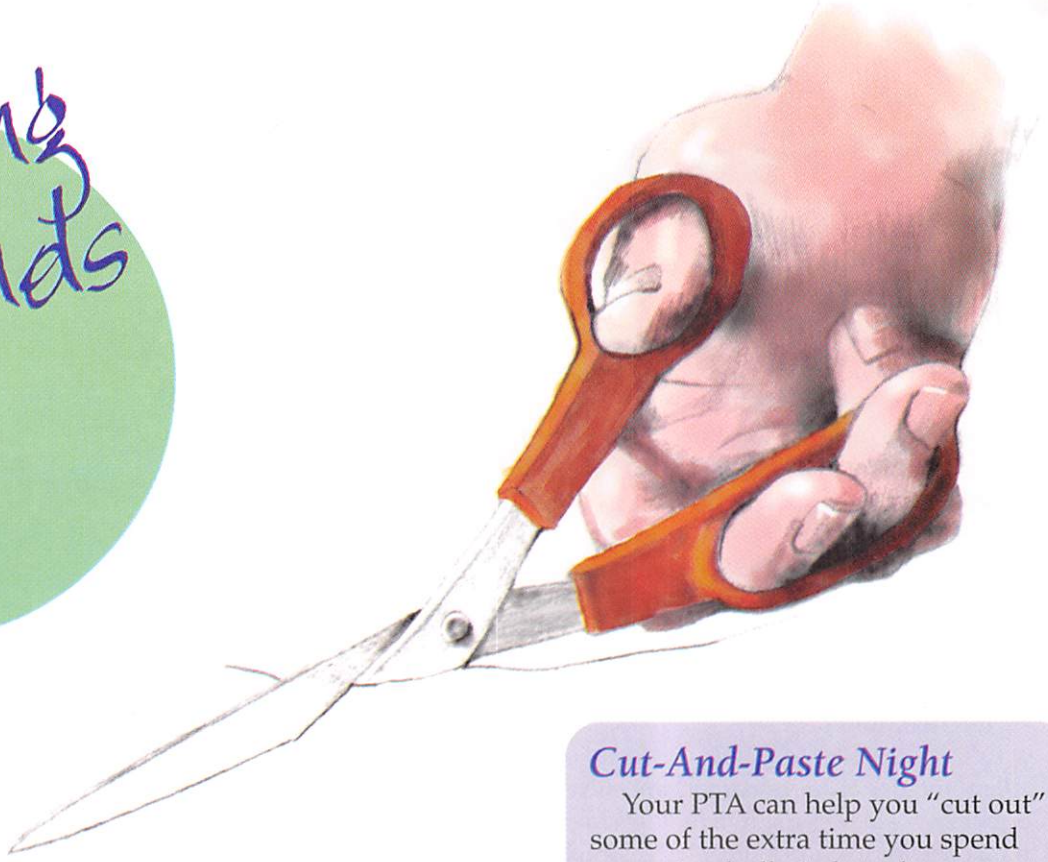
- are sensitive to others' feelings and responsive to others' needs
- are secure enough to combine their own problem-solving efforts with the efforts of others
- are not afraid to offer divergent solutions or to validate others' solutions
- generally have a sense of humor
- are able to help each other through challenging situations
- develop positive feelings toward school, teachers, and peers

A motivational support program such as Top Cooperators stresses the fourth R: *relationships.* Children learn to contribute, clash, compromise, coach, and care. Barriers come down. Students who achieve cooperative success together tend to regard each other as respected equals.

A cooperative motivational program helps youngsters understand in very concrete terms: *not one of us has it all together—but together we have it all!*

Helping Hands

Tips for connecting with parents & volunteers



Learning That's In The Bag

Team up with a local grocery store to give your community a glimpse of what your students are learning. Follow these steps:

1. Ask the grocery-store manager to give you a supply of large paper grocery bags, several for each student. Explain that you'll have your students illustrate concepts that they're learning on these bags; then you'll return the bags to be used by store customers.
2. Next have your students decide what they'd like to illustrate on the bags. For example, they might want to draw and label the parts of a flower for science, write a short book review, or complete a tricky math problem.
3. Distribute the bags. Tell each student to write the following on each bag: his or her first name, your name, and your school name. Or, if you prefer, you can put the bags in a free-time center for students to illustrate as they have time.
4. Have students check one another's work. If you're going to display their work for your community, it's crucial that it be correct!
5. Finally, return these bags to the grocery store. Shoppers will be interested in and impressed with the many concepts your students have "in the bag"!

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

Cut-And-Paste Night

Your PTA can help you "cut out" some of the extra time you spend preparing bulletin boards, centers, and other materials by holding a monthly Cut-And-Paste Night. At this event, volunteers cut out, color, laminate, and photocopy materials that you and your colleagues need for classroom use. A PTA volunteer coordinates each event by

- letting teachers know about Cut-And-Paste Night well ahead of time
- picking up the teachers' projects and instructions for completing them
- gathering any materials needed, including scissors, colored paper, crayons, markers, and so forth
- recruiting parents, middle- and high-school students, retirees, members of youth and adult service clubs, and other volunteers to attend Cut-And-Paste Night
- returning the completed projects to the teachers

This is a great time-saver!

—Terry Healy, Eugene Field Elementary, Manhattan, KS

To learn more about getting families involved in your school, check

Kids Take Charge

Here's a great way to help parents see what their children are learning. This year—instead of leading parent conferences yourself—hold student-led conferences. Follow these steps:

1. Have a preconference with each student. Discuss how the child thinks he or she is doing in both academics and behavior. Students' self-assessments are usually right on target. Take notes on what the children say.
2. Explain to each child that instead of the parent(s) and teacher having a conference this year, the parent(s), teacher, *and* student will all have a conference, which the student will lead. The child should use your notes from the preconference (older students can take their own notes) to discuss progress in academics and behavior. Explain that you'll also add details as necessary.
3. Finally, explain to the child that the group will answer any questions, discuss concerns, and set goals for the child.

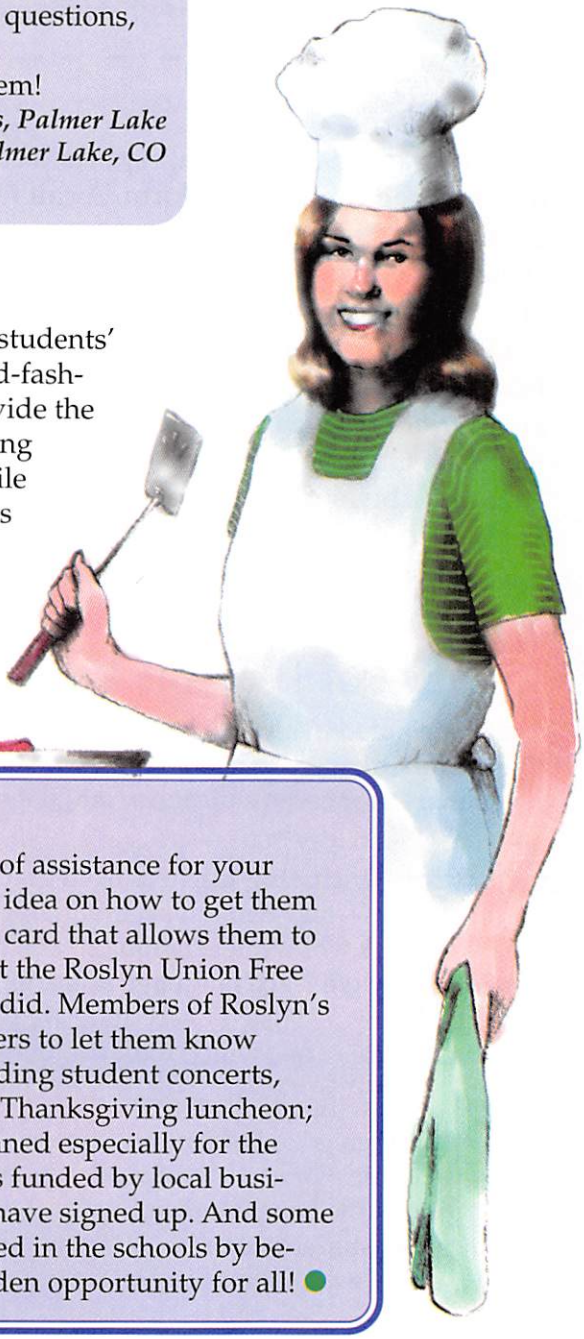
Parents respond enthusiastically to these conferences. Try them!

—Sue Majors, Palmer Lake Elementary, Palmer Lake, CO

Holding On To Summer

You can enjoy those last summer days *and* get to know your students' families with this fun event. Early in the school year plan an old-fashioned hot-dog roast at a local park. Tell families that you'll provide the hot dogs, buns, and condiments; and ask them to sign up to bring side dishes, desserts, beverages, and paper products. Then, while everyone is gathered around the grill, you can chat with parents and answer their questions. This will become an eagerly anticipated tradition!

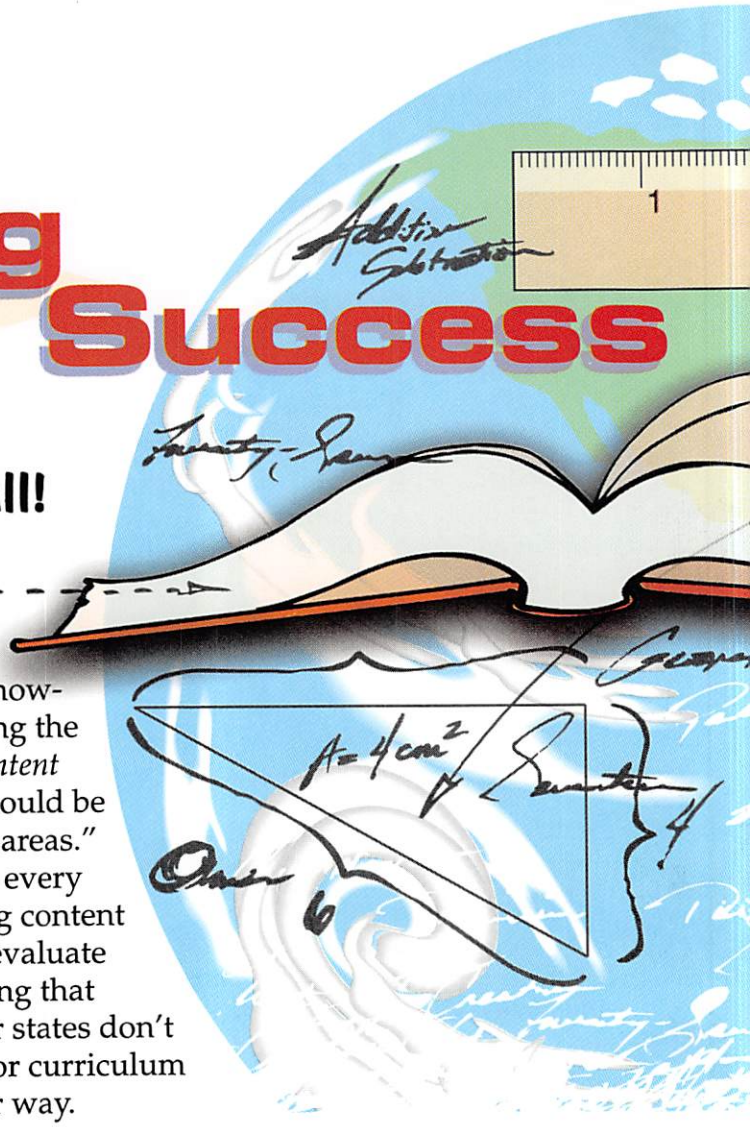
—Cam Thaden
Enterprise Elementary
Enterprise, KS



Giving Out Gold Cards?

Older adults can be a great source of assistance for your school and students. Here's a golden idea on how to get them involved: give each of them a special card that allows them to attend school events free. That's what the Roslyn Union Free School District in Roslyn, New York, did. Members of Roslyn's Gold Card program receive newsletters to let them know about upcoming school events, including student concerts, plays, and art exhibits; a community Thanksgiving luncheon; and more. Some events are even planned especially for the Gold Card members. This program is funded by local businesses, and so far 1,500 older adults have signed up. And some have chosen to get even more involved in the schools by becoming classroom volunteers—a golden opportunity for all!

Measuring Students' Success



Content Standards: They're Not That Scary After All!

by Jean Wolf Kirschenman, Elkton, SD

During the 1980s several reports were published showing the need for school reform. A call for standardizing the curriculum grew out of those reports. Simply put, *content standards* are "general guidelines of what students should be able to do and what they should know in the subject areas."

Every state is facing content standards, and nearly every teacher will be affected. Some states are already using content standards to drive curriculum, assess students, and evaluate teachers. Other states have passed legislation requiring that standards be in place by certain dates. And still other states don't yet have definite plans for using content standards for curriculum and assessment, but more than likely they're on their way.

My Experience With Writing Content Standards

I participated in a yearlong process to create standards for my school. Our standards were to be based on my state's content standards and benchmarks for communication/language arts.

- Our team—including teachers from grades K–12 and administrators—met two days a month for nine months. For our first task, we wrote a language-arts narrative: a rationale of why we teach language arts and what students should know. We listed everything we thought was important in this area, which took a long time!

- Next we prioritized and organized the ideas from our narrative into the four strands of language arts: *reading, writing, listening/viewing,* and *speaking*. Based on that, we wrote six standards for what our students should be able to do in language arts.

- We then got a little more specific. For each standard we wrote benchmarks of what students should achieve at different levels: K–2, 3–4, 5–8, and 9–12.

- Then, for each benchmark, we wrote curriculum statements. Our curriculum statements list specific skills, such as "Evaluate technical material to assess whether it is accurate, current, relevant, and appropriate." The statements are assessable, but they are not activities; they're specific, but not too specific. They flow logically across grade levels, becoming increasingly complex by 12th grade. They include what a student should be able to do, not what a teacher does to teach the skill.

What Were The Advantages Of Our Process?

- Our team was directly involved in writing our school's content standards document. We'll be using a curriculum that *we* created.

- We worked across grade levels. We gained respect for one another, plus a greater awareness of what is taught in grades K–12 and why.

- We saw the big picture—not just the daily lessons that take up most of our planning time.

- We had a special time set aside for this purpose. We didn't have to cram it in during prep time or after school. We had time to answer these questions: What do we teach?, Why do we teach it?, and What is most important?

- We sought the input of other staff members, students, school-board members, and the community.

- The process didn't dramatically change the content of what we teach. It just clarified and prioritized it. Reactions usually went something like "I should really teach more creative writing" or "I need to find a better method of evaluating reading progress" —not "I should scrap this whole unit and start over!"

- We met people from other school districts and compared notes on curriculum.

- We experienced class from the other side of the desk. A sixth-grade teacher commented, "It's good to see what it's like to be a student again. It was hard to have our work critiqued for rewriting, but it was good for us."

- The greatest benefit by far was time to talk. We found we were starved for conversation. (I was personally responsible for a driver missing three exits off the interstate while driving home from the meetings—we were talking and listening so earnestly!) We had time to discuss why we teach particular topics.

- When we were finished, we had created a document that described our curriculum to teachers, parents, students, and the community.

- Since we completed the process in 18 sessions (two days a month during the school year), I really appreciated the time we had between sessions. However, the process could be completed in a summer.

continued

What Were The Disadvantages Of Our Process?

- It took time! (And yes, that was also listed under "advantages.") This work took us away from our classrooms and other responsibilities. We all returned to stacks of papers, basketball games, play practices, and concerts.

- A lot of abstract thinking was involved. We're accustomed to thinking about activities, not about the big picture behind the activities. We wanted to focus on the practical and concrete.

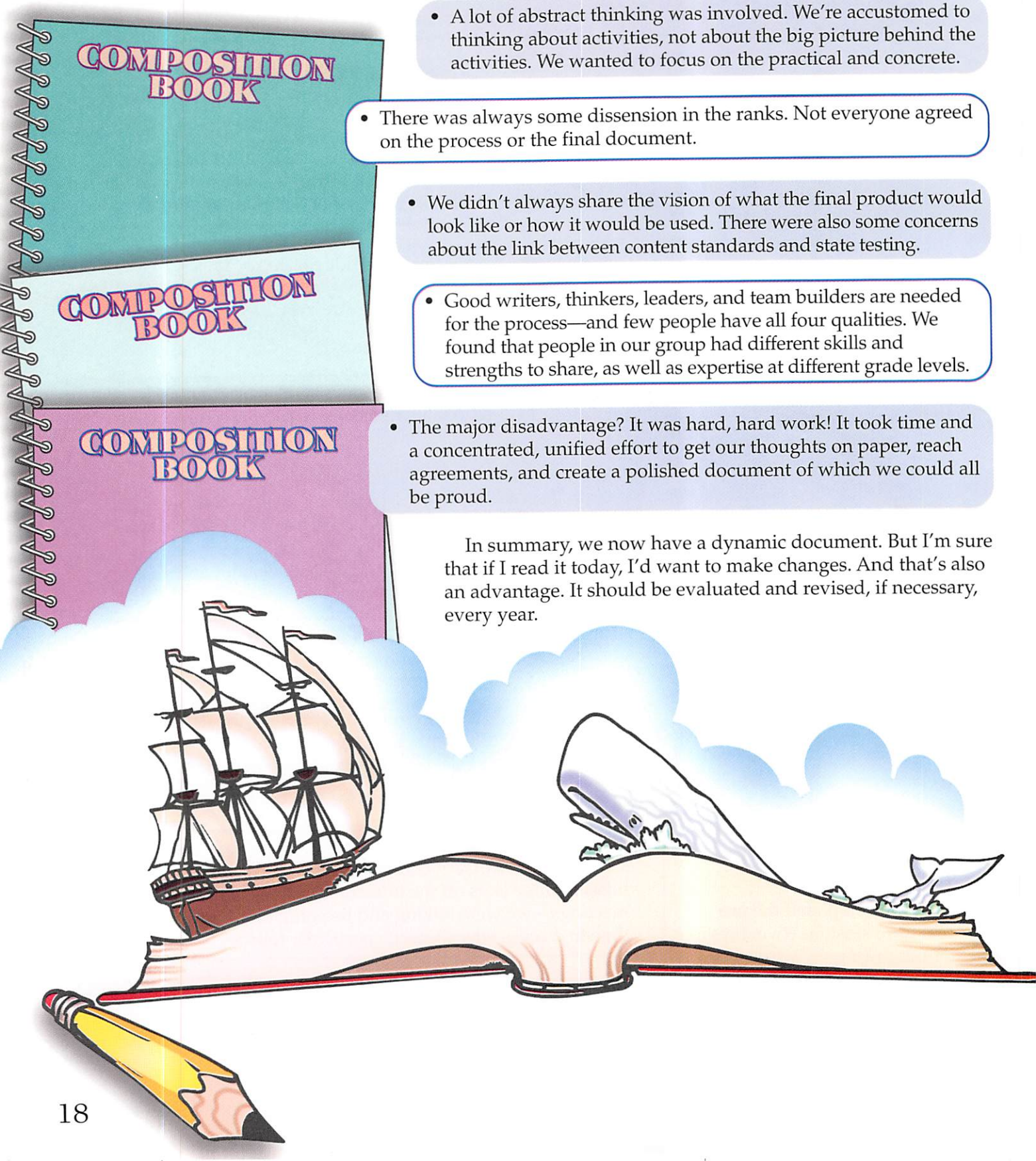
- There was always some dissension in the ranks. Not everyone agreed on the process or the final document.

- We didn't always share the vision of what the final product would look like or how it would be used. There were also some concerns about the link between content standards and state testing.

- Good writers, thinkers, leaders, and team builders are needed for the process—and few people have all four qualities. We found that people in our group had different skills and strengths to share, as well as expertise at different grade levels.

- The major disadvantage? It was hard, hard work! It took time and a concentrated, unified effort to get our thoughts on paper, reach agreements, and create a polished document of which we could all be proud.

In summary, we now have a dynamic document. But I'm sure that if I read it today, I'd want to make changes. And that's also an advantage. It should be evaluated and revised, if necessary, every year.



Getting Ready To Write Content Standards? Here Are Some Helpful Tips And Suggestions

- Get financial assistance. Possible funding sources include Eisenhower money, Title I, Title III, state and federal education funds, and private funding sources. Apply for grants. Your time is worth it.

- Keep up with what is happening in your state and what will be required of you. Although you may never have heard of content standards, many schools will be required to implement them in the next few years.

- Take the time for research and discussion throughout the process. Don't think, "Let's just work and get this thing done." You probably won't be as satisfied with the final product.

- Publishing companies offer texts, guidelines, and sets of standards. They're very helpful, especially when you're under time and/or money constraints. But be wary of basing your curriculum on these materials. Don't use them as shortcuts to avoid determining what should be taught in a subject area in your district.

- Use every grid, chart, and rubric available, and create your own to help in the planning. It's helpful to see your work in an organized, understandable manner.

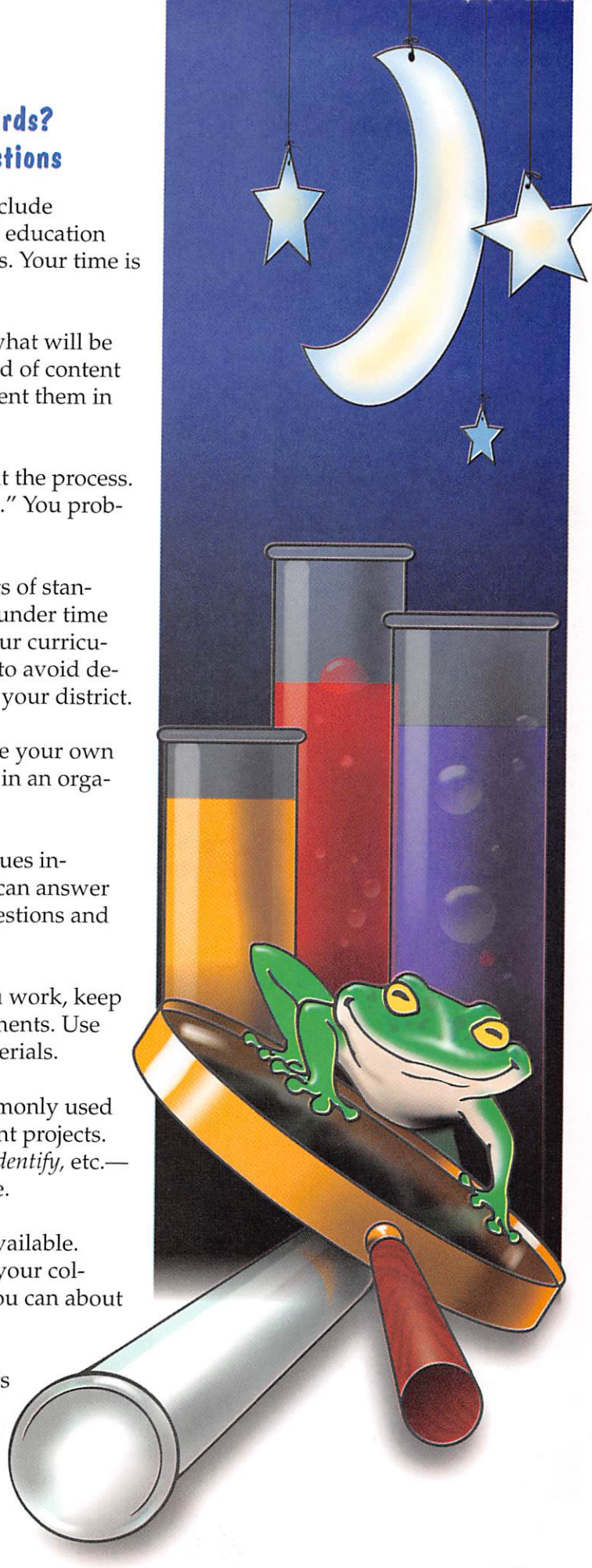
- If you're on a school or state team, keep your colleagues informed. Address their concerns. Find someone who can answer their questions. If you're not a part of a team, ask questions and keep track of the progress your school is making.

- Collect paperwork and organize it in a folder. As you work, keep in mind your school's philosophy and mission statements. Use your handbooks, plans of study, and curriculum materials.

- When writing benchmarks, use verbs like those commonly used with Bloom's Taxonomy or other authentic assessment projects. But be sure a verb—*differentiate, incorporate, compile, identify,* etc.—is appropriate to the situation and that it is assessable.

- Lots of information on content standards is readily available. Check professional magazines and the Internet. Ask your colleagues for books and articles. In addition, read all you can about brain research, curriculum, and teaching trends.

- Find examples of other documents. Most departments of education have copies of their states' content standards or have examples that schools have created. ●



Grin & Share It

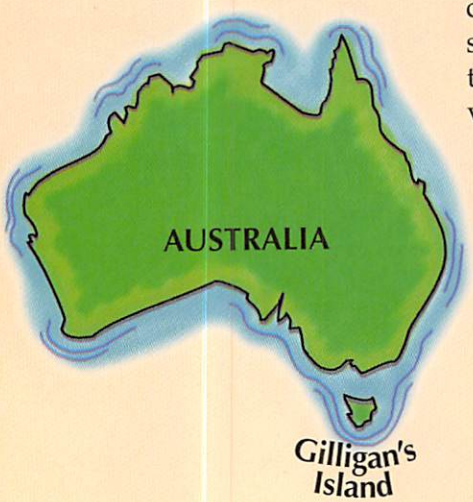
Glimpses into the lighter side of teaching

Saints Preserve Us!

I was having a discussion with my sixth graders about the origins of Halloween traditions. I explained that the word *Halloween* came from *All Hallows' Eve* and that another word for *hallows* is *saints*. One student asked, "What's a saint?" I responded, "It's the title some religions give to a holy person. Some Christian saints are Mary [the mother of Jesus], St. Peter, St. Paul—people like that." I then continued talking about the word *eve* when I was abruptly interrupted by a kid with, "I still don't get it! What are saints?" Before I could open my mouth, the girl next to him blurted, "Weren't you listening? She just explained it! Peter, Paul, and Mary!"

—Julia Alarie, Essex Middle School, Essex, VT

Quotable Kids!



- The lesson in our fourth-grade map-skills booklet was on islands. The class had done very well identifying the various islands that were shown, until it was Jody's turn. He was quite puzzled about the name of the island off the coast of Australia. He thought and thought, then asked very seriously, "Is it Gilligan's Island?"

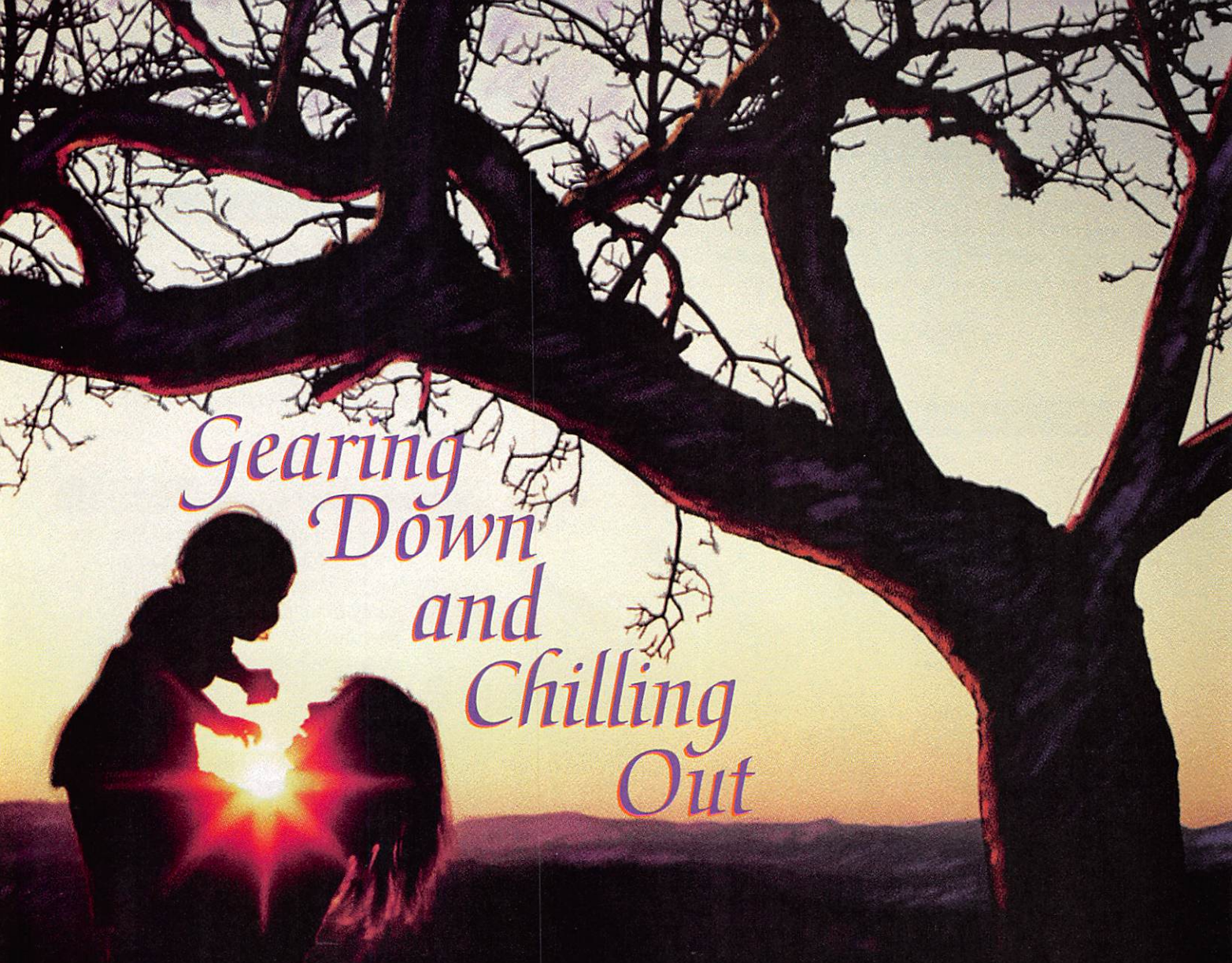
—Isobel L. Livingstone, Rahway, NJ

- I taught the two types of letters—friendly and business—to my fourth graders. Later on, I gave a test and asked what the two kinds of letters were. One child replied, "friendly and chain."

—Joan M. Macey, Binghamton, NY

- In early November, I asked my students whether they knew what a veteran was. One student's hand shot up as he responded that it was someone who didn't eat meat. When I explained that the correct term was *vegetarian*, he said, "I didn't know that animal doctors didn't eat meat."

—Therese Durhman, Mountain View Elementary School, Hickory, NC



Gearing Down and Chilling Out

Learn How To Leave Schoolwork At School So You Can Focus On Your *Real* Homework—Your Family!

The last child has left the building, your faculty meeting is finally finished, and you have your new math unit all ready to go for tomorrow. Sound like the most challenging part of your day is over? Not quite. You have one more challenge—switching from teacher to mom, dad, wife, husband, daughter, aunt, or friend.

Sometimes it's hard to leave your job at school and switch gears to focus on your life at home. Phone calls to and from parents, running to the store to pick up supplies for tomorrow's experiment, concerns about a particular child—these things creep into your life at home. But to maintain balance in your life, you have to learn to separate home and school. Our subscribers share their creative and practical tips on how they make the switch—with success.

Don't Put Off Until Tomorrow...

I get my next day's teaching materials ready *before* I leave school the day before. Sometimes I can find a few minutes to do this toward the end of the day, while my students are out of the room. Otherwise I do it after school. It's easier for me to shift gears if I know tomorrow's work is ready to go!

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

Trading Jobs

A great way to change gears is to let someone else be the teacher for awhile. Taking a recreational class—such as water aerobics, calligraphy, or ceramics—helps me relax!

—Laverne Dickey, Glenwood Elementary School, Virginia Beach, VA

continued ☞

Think Time

Oftentimes at the end of the day there's a particular situation or challenge that I want to think about. I reserve the drive home from school for sorting out that problem. But once I step inside the door, I put the matter aside until the next day. This really helps me separate my school life from my home life!

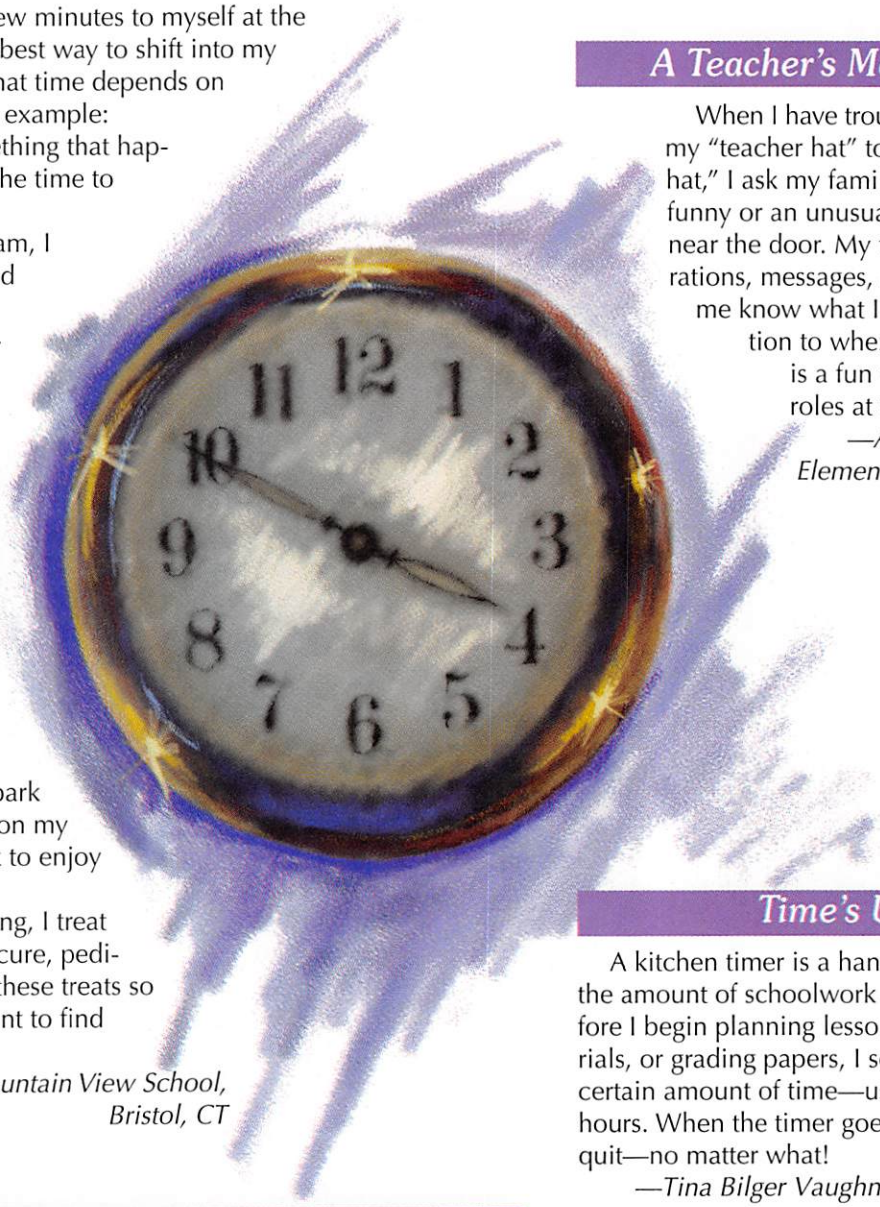
—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

Time For Me

I've found that having a few minutes to myself at the end of the school day is the best way to shift into my at-home life. How I spend that time depends on the kind of day I've had. For example:

- If I'm upset about something that happened at school, I use the time to write in my journal.
- If I need to burn off steam, I take a brisk walk around the block—and sometimes I even talk to myself along the way!
- If I need encouragement, I make a short phone call to someone I care about—and who cares about me.
- If I need a pick-me-up, I take a quick detour to a favorite store. Even if I don't buy anything, just looking around lifts my spirits.
- If I need to relax, I stop for a few minutes at a park or another scenic spot on my way home. Sitting back to enjoy the day is refreshing!
- If I need some pampering, I treat myself to a quick manicure, pedicure, or facial. I enjoy these treats so much that I make a point to find time for them!

—Mary Dinneen, Mountain View School, Bristol, CT



Setting Limits

No matter how much schoolwork I bring home or how many after-school meetings I have, I make a point each evening to spend at least 30 minutes doing something fun, just for me. Reading (nothing school related!), cross-stitching, knitting, or walking helps me clear my mind, sleep better at night, and get revitalized for another day.

—Sue LeBeau, West End School, Long Branch, NJ

A Teacher's Many Hats

When I have trouble switching from my "teacher hat" to my "mommy hat," I ask my family to help: I find a funny or an unusual hat and leave it near the door. My family adds decorations, messages, and notes to help me know what I need to pay attention to when I get home. This is a fun way to change roles at the end of the day.

—Amy Barsanti, Pines Elementary, Plymouth, NC

Time's Up!

A kitchen timer is a handy tool for limiting the amount of schoolwork I do at home. Before I begin planning lessons, preparing materials, or grading papers, I set the timer for a certain amount of time—usually one or two hours. When the timer goes off, it's time to quit—no matter what!

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

Ringing Off The Hook

Staying in touch with students' parents is important. However, I request that parents call me at school whenever possible, and I suggest the best times to call. I find I'm better able to turn off the teacher mode at home if I'm not talking on the phone with students' parents each night.

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

Daily Escape

Each week I borrow an audiobook from my local library. On my drive home from school each day, I pop the tape into my car's cassette player and let my mind venture off to another world. Sometimes when I pull into my driveway, I just can't "put my book down." So I bring the cassette inside and listen as I sip a cup of tea. It works great!

—Nancy Glynn, Dalton, MA

Giving 100 Percent

When I'm at school I try to always stay 100 percent focused on teaching. And when I get home I try to do the same for my husband and children. But shutting out thoughts of school can be tough. Following these two rules helps me:

- I try not to bring work home unless it's absolutely necessary.
- When thoughts of school creep into my consciousness while I'm at home, I think to myself, "Stop!" Then I immediately try to pull my thoughts back to my children or husband. They deserve my full attention!

—Mary Anne Duggan, Aztec Elementary School, Scottsdale, AZ

In-School Debriefing

My husband and I are both elementary teachers. We've found that the best way to change gears from school to home is to start the transition while we're still at school. We both like to take five or ten minutes to sit at our desks at the end of the day and do something that's not schoolwork. Reading a book, having a cup of coffee or a snack, listening to music, doodling—tasks like these work well.

—Lynn M. Jungen, Trinity Lutheran School, Manitowoc, WI

Car-Pool Pals

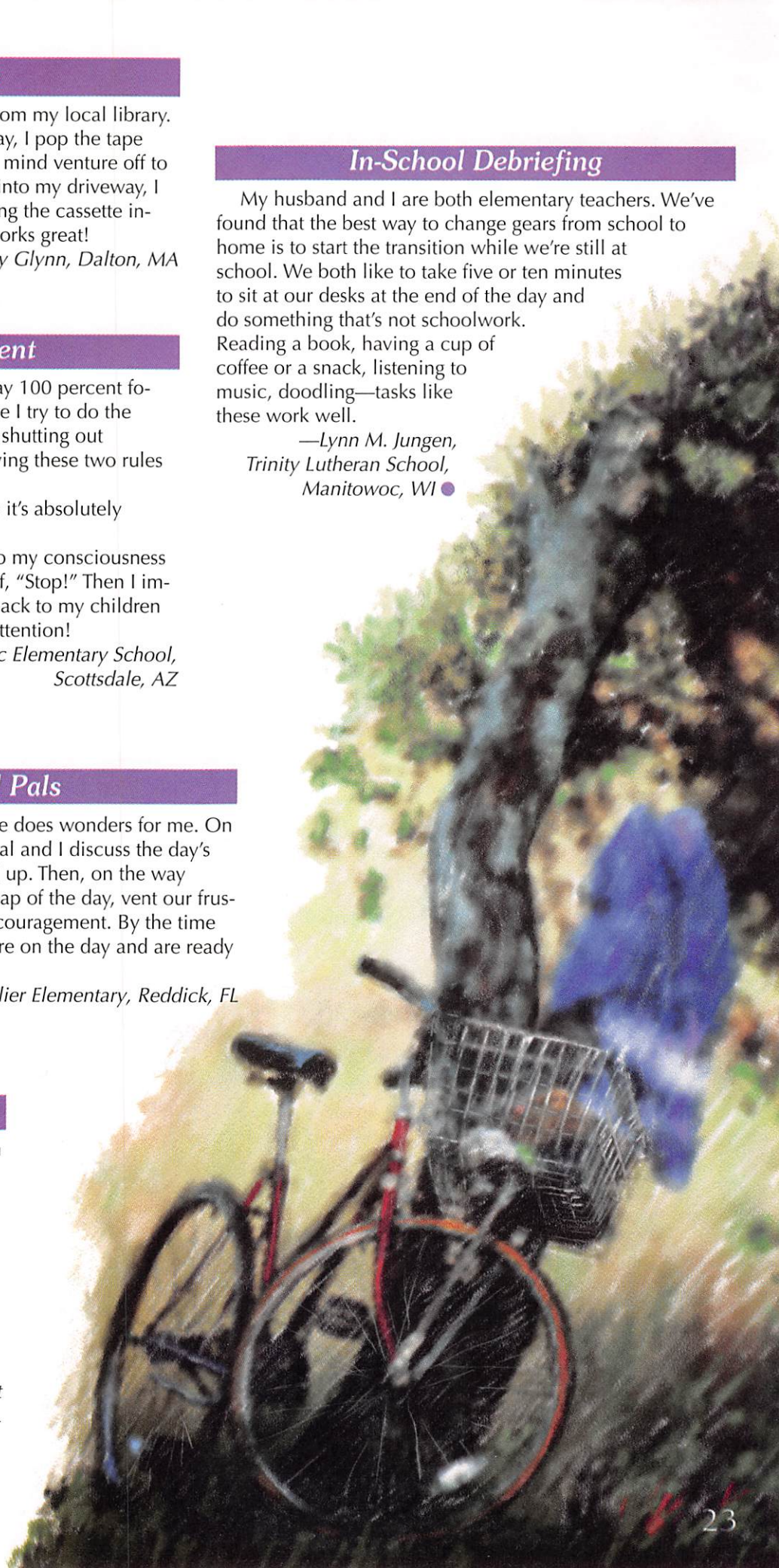
Sharing a ride with a colleague does wonders for me. On the way to school, my car-pool pal and I discuss the day's events and get each other geared up. Then, on the way home, we give one another a recap of the day, vent our frustrations, and offer advice and encouragement. By the time we're home, we each have closure on the day and are ready to concentrate on life at home!

—Sharon DeCarlis, Reddick-Collier Elementary, Reddick, FL

A Different World

Too often I try to apply my classroom rules and procedures at home. But my husband and children don't want to be treated like my students! I have to constantly remind myself to do things at home that I wouldn't ordinarily do in the classroom—share my feelings and values, for example, and be a little more flexible about rules and expectations. This works out better for all of us!

—Elizabeth P. Pittman, Hillcrest Elementary, Enterprise, AL



10 Things Every Teacher Knows

It's The Definitive List!

by Phyliss Grady Adcock, West Lake Elementary, Apex, NC

Call it instinct, call it intuition, call it prophecy: there are certain truths that every teacher discovers. Some of my favorite discoveries are…

1. Paper clips chain themselves together at night.

2. Soup will always be served on the day that school pictures are taken.

3. If the principal starts complimenting you, beware: bad news or a big favor is right around the corner.

4. School lawn mowers are never used before 8:00 A.M. or after 3:00 P.M. And they are most likely to be used on the day of the big test.

5. It is a mortal sin to get more than five tater tots in the cafeteria.

6. You can eat an entire meal in 15 minutes, along with loaning lunch money, examining a lost tooth, and solving a major crisis. That's why you can have only five tater tots.

7. The school secretary could be CEO of any major corporation.

8. Every year you will receive a brass apple, a box of chocolate-covered cherries, and a gift that you're sure was recycled.

9. Number-two pencils rule your world.

10. You will be able to recognize former teachers in heaven by the rubber bands around their wrists.

One Good Deed Leads To Another!

A Year-Round Plan For Super Service Projects!

by Helen Berkman and Elaine Kurtz, Schuykill School, Phoenixville, PA

Service projects—they're a great idea. But with the curriculum already stuffed with mandated subjects, who has time for extras?

You do! That is, if you incorporate service projects *into* the curriculum instead of adding them on top of what you already have to teach. That's what we did when our school received a national service-learning grant. We wanted to be sure our first and second graders didn't miss out on this experience, so we worked together to weave service projects into our curriculum. Our students got hands-on lessons about writing stories and letters; practiced math, handwriting, artistic skills, and communication skills; learned about their community; read and listened to some wonderful books; and more. Give it a try!

SEPTEMBER

First Steps

Consider joining up with another class, either at your grade level or at another level. Early in the school year keep the classes separate and focus on talking with students about what it means to work as a community. Teach, practice, and reinforce community-building skills such as cooperating, sharing ideas, creating community rules, and so forth.

Once each class has developed its own sense of community, then students are ready to join forces. Exchange class lists and pair students randomly. Explain to your students that the classes are going to work together each month throughout the year and that each student will have a partner from the other class.

Joining Classroom Communities

Prior to the classes' first meeting, get your students prepared by giving them ideas about what they can talk about with their partners, including families, hobbies, favorite books, and favorite school activities.

Once students have spent some time getting to know one another, have the pairs work on a class book titled "Our New Friends." Children draw themselves with their buddies and write their names under their pictures. Have each student tell the combined groups something she learned about her new buddy.

What Is Service Learning?

Even though the terms are used interchangeably, service learning and community service *are* somewhat different. With *service learning*, students apply skills they are learning as part of the curriculum to a real-life community problem or need. With *community service*, projects aren't necessarily linked to the curriculum. So if you don't have time for extras, service learning is the way to go!

To learn more check out these Web sites:

- The National Service-Learning Cooperative Clearinghouse, http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu
- National Youth Leadership Council, http://www.mightymedia.com/edunet/nylc

OCTOBER

Apple Season

Now that the partners have gotten to know one another, they're ready for their first service project. Start off with the popular fall theme of apples. Explain to your students that the two classes are going to work together to learn about apples and to make applesauce to donate to the local homeless shelter.

Buy several different types of apples, enough so that each student can taste each type. Ahead of time, peel and slice them. When the groups meet, make a bar graph showing the types of apples. Then have pairs taste a slice of each type and vote on which they like the best. Record the results on your graph. Explain that when the partners meet again, they will be making applesauce.

You'll need parent volunteers to help out with the second part of this project. Ahead of time, check your cookbooks for a basic applesauce recipe. Purchase the applesauce ingredients and gather the needed materials. Divide the combined group in half. One group will discuss life in a homeless shelter and read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, while the other group helps prepare the applesauce. Then have the groups switch.

NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving Blessings

Continue helping the homeless by making sandwiches and Thanksgiving cards for the shelter. Ahead of time, you'll need to get bread, peanut butter, jelly, plastic wrap, plastic knives, and paper plates so that each pair of students can make a sandwich. (Older students might want to make several sandwiches each.) You'll also need to get paper and art supplies to make the cards.

Bring the groups together to read *Thanksgiving At The Tappletons'* by Eileen Spinelli or another Thanksgiving-related book. Then give each pair the supplies to make a sandwich. Have the partners work together to make the sandwich on the paper plate and wrap it in plastic wrap; then have them make a Thanksgiving card to send to the shelter residents too. Suggest that students draw on skills they've recently learned, such as writing cinquains or acrostic poems, to connect their cards to the curriculum.

DECEMBER

A Season Of Giving

Spread the true spirit of the holidays by reading *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting to your combined groups. Then have the children list items that they each have—such as a bed to sleep in, books, toys, a house, and food—to compare with what the boy in the story has. After the reading, students will probably suggest on their own that they should collect holiday gifts for the people at the homeless shelter. Brainstorm what students can make or purchase, including books, gloves, hats, blankets, stuffed animals, toothbrushes, and so forth. Send a note home to parents and have students bring in items over the next two weeks or so. You might also want to request that parents donate a few rolls of wrapping paper.

Collect the gifts, wrapping paper, tape, scissors, drawing paper, and art supplies. Have the groups meet again to wrap the gifts and to make cards to accompany them. Incorporate some impromptu math activities like counting and graphing the numbers of gifts wrapped in a particular type or color of paper. Finally, have the kids load the gifts into bags to be taken to the shelter.

continued ☞

JANUARY

Sleepy-Time Friends

Wintertime is the perfect time to study hibernation, so use this as your theme for the groups' next meeting. Celebrate Sleepy-Time Day by having students bring pajamas, stuffed animals, sleeping bags, and favorite bedtime stories to school. Serve a bedtime snack and allow students time to read to one another. Then read *A Color Of His Own* by Leo Lionni to the groups. Have partners work together to create their own books titled "Colors Of Our Own," modeled after Lionni's story. Explain that these books will be given to new mothers and their babies at a local hospital—a new group to help in the new year!

Once the pairs have completed their books, have each child share one page. Afterward students can wrap their books to be presented to the moms and babies.

FEBRUARY

Look What We've Been Learning!

In February turn the focus to letter writing by having students write to President Clinton. Ask the pairs to explain in the letters how they're playing a part in the president's call for increased volunteerism and to tell the president a little about what they've learned so far. You might also want to share a story about volunteering, such as *Uncle Willie And The Soup Kitchen* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan or *The Berenstain Bears Lend A Helping Hand* by Stan and Jan Berenstain.

During your February meeting, also start making special gifts to take to a local nursing home in March. Create cardboard window boxes to bring spring into the nursing home. Here's what to do:

1. Collect clean half-gallon milk cartons, one per child. Cut off the top of each carton about six inches from the base.
2. Have pairs of students cover their cartons with construction paper and line the bottom with Styrofoam®.
3. Finally, have partners work together to make three or four tissue-paper flowers each, then glue them to Popsicle® sticks and insert them in their window boxes.

MARCH

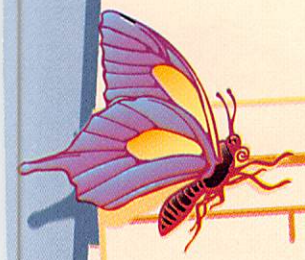
Sharing A Celebration Of Spring

All year long your students have been reading and writing stories and learning poems and songs. Take these talents—and your special gift of spring window boxes—to a local nursing home. To get students ready for the visit, read them a story about life in a nursing home, such as *My Grandma's In A Nursing Home* by Judy Delton and Dorothy Tucker. Ahead of time, have small groups (perhaps two or three sets of partners per group) choose and practice a story, poem, or song that they would like to read or perform for the residents of the nursing home you've chosen. After the show, present the window boxes to the residents to bring the beautiful spring weather inside. This project marks the first time your students will actually meet the people they're helping. Once you get back to school, set aside time to discuss what the students observed, how they felt, and if they think they made a difference.

APRIL

Buddying Up For Our Earth

Now that students have cared for people in their local community, give them a chance to take care of their school community too. Explain that the partners will be acting as "trash busters" to clean up the school grounds in honor of Earth Day. Gather paper grocery-store bags and make several patterns for kid-sized paper vests. Have students use the patterns to cut out their vests, and provide crayons so they can decorate them with nature symbols. Have the kids wear their trash buster vests outdoors to do their cleanup. Ahead of time, get gloves and trash bags; then lead the kids in the cleanup effort. If possible, weigh the trash you pick up. Do another cleanup a few weeks later and compare the results. You might even want to have a picnic on your newly cleaned-up school grounds and read an Earth Day–related story, such as *Clifford's® Spring Clean-Up* by Norman Bridwell.



MAY

Time For Good-Byes

Begin the groups' final meeting by reading *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown. Have the pairs write books of their own, following the format of *The Important Book* to tell what's important about the services they've performed this year. Suggest that the students look back at each month and write about the service projects they did and what they learned. You'll all be surprised at how much learning—and at how many different types of learning—took place this year!

What Makes A Good Project?

1. **Make sure your project meets a need.** If residents of your local nursing home don't have space to accommodate window boxes or the homeless shelter doesn't have refrigerator space for applesauce, then choose a different project that better meets their needs. Talk with those in charge well ahead of time.

2. **Always keep the curriculum in mind.** Doing a good deed feels great. But doing a good deed that helps your students master the curriculum feels even better.

3. **Extend the learning.** Give your students a chance to talk, write, and draw about their service activities.

4. **Get your students involved in planning activities.** Even young students can brainstorm ideas for whom they would like to help and what they would like to do. ●

Keeping Current

Helping you stay up-to-date on trends in teaching

By Karen A. Brudnak

During the last few years you've probably been helping your students collect and evaluate their work to create portfolios that demonstrate their learning. As you've seen how valuable these collections are to students, you might have realized that portfolios could be beneficial to teachers too. And you'd be right.

Over the last five years or so, *professional portfolios* have been gaining popularity. Many new teachers are required to prepare them as part of their undergraduate education; many experienced teachers have chosen to prepare them as a way of evaluating their teaching practice, summarizing their strengths, and recording their teaching careers.

What is a professional portfolio?

The word *portfolio* has Latin roots: *port*, which means "to carry," and *folio*, which means "papers or pages." So a portfolio is a collection of papers that you can show to others to demonstrate your teaching strengths and beliefs.

Artists, designers, journalists, and photographers have always collected their work to show others. A professional portfolio gives teachers a way to show what they've done too. For a list of items a portfolio might include, see "What goes in my portfolio?" on page 31.

Why have professional portfolios become popular?

There are plenty of reasons:

- Preparing a portfolio gives you a chance to model for your students how to select items, write reflections, and so forth. You can work on your portfolio while your students work on theirs.
- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards includes preparing a portfolio as part of its certification requirements.
- Some districts use portfolios as part of teacher evaluation.

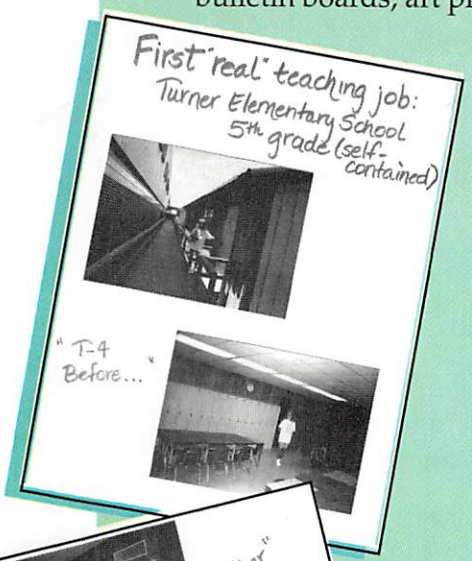
Education is not something to prepare you for life; it is

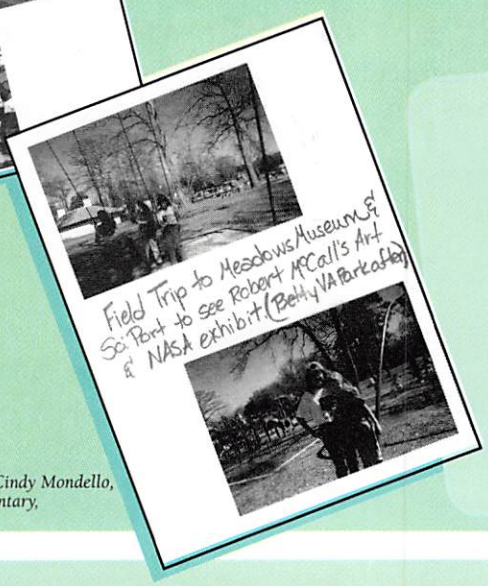
What goes in my portfolio?

The sky's the limit! You can include the following:

- table of contents
- resumé
- introduction to your portfolio
- explanation of your educational philosophy or goals
- approach to classroom management
- lesson plans
- photos or sketches of your classroom arrangement, bulletin boards, art projects, and centers

Certificate of Recognition
Presented to
Cynthia Kay Mondello
Shreve Island Elementary
Caddo Teacher of the Year Nominee
Elementary School Division
October 5, 1995





- photos of students both in everyday activities and on special occasions, such as field trips or class parties
- photo of yourself
- notes from parents, colleagues, and administrators
- samples of student work
- class newsletters
- pie charts or graphs that show student progress
- excerpts from your teaching journal or anecdotal records
- videotapes or audiotapes of your teaching
- list of computer programs you use
- college transcripts and scores from tests such as the NTE
- list of workshops attended or grants received
- newspaper articles in which you're quoted or your students are featured
- memberships in community and professional organizations

Depending on the purpose of your portfolio, you might also want to include some items that give a sense of who you are as a person, such as

- lists of books you use in your teaching and books you've enjoyed personally
- samples of writing you've done for classroom use and for use outside the classroom
- lists of your interests and hobbies, accompanied by samples and photos

Sample pages from Cindy Mondello, Shreve Island Elementary, Shreveport, LA

continued ☛

Keeping Current

Portfolios sound like they're for new graduates or for teachers changing jobs. Why should I create a portfolio?

Preparing a portfolio is an excellent way to

- reflect on your teaching, including what has worked and why
- show evidence of your educational beliefs and experiences
- celebrate your development as a teacher
- introduce yourself to parents and students
- underscore your image as a professional

Plus, having a record of your achievements makes applying for grants and filling out end-of-year reports on goals and student achievement much easier!

Tips for assembling your portfolio

Decide what your portfolio's purpose is.

Is it a way of assessing your teaching skills and deciding what you'd like to work on? Are you preparing for a potential move to a new school or position? Would you like to use it to introduce yourself to parents? Your portfolio's purpose has a direct impact on how you'll put it together.

Pick a good storage spot.

Designate a file, bin, or box where you can stash items you might like to include in your portfolio. Save, save, save—you'll have a chance to sort through the material later to make the hard choices about exactly what to include.

Decide what format you want to use.

A three-ring binder with plastic sleeves is probably the most convenient and popular portfolio format. A decorated box or an electronic portfolio is also a good choice. Be sure to choose a format that can grow as your teaching grows.

Decide how you'd like to organize your material.

Chronologically? By theme, unit, or curriculum area? In order of what you're most proud of? By particular goals, such as personal goals or district or curriculum-area standards?

Include reflections.

Write captions or brief descriptions of the items you include, explaining what you learned with certain activities, what students learned, why something worked well, how the activity fits with your educational philosophy, and so forth. Without these insights you'll have a wonderful teaching scrapbook but not a true portfolio.

Growth is the only evidence of life.—Spanish proverb

Field Trips
The Natural Science Center (Greensboro, NC)
SOS 3 Leader
THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO
*Darcy Brown
FOR EXEMPLARY SCIENCE LEADERSHIP
IN ATTENDING THE SOS 3 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE IN NORTH CAROLINA JUNE 11-13, 1996, AT ALAMANCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE.
THE TEACHER LEADS BY INQUIRY OF EVERYDAY PHENOMENA TO ACHIEVE SCIENTIFIC LITERACY.
Thank you for participating.
Presented by THOMAS F. RICHARDSON, President of Delta Education, Inc.
A classroom favorite is making books. Students love to rewrite the story in their own word, illustrate or write another version.
Things We Like
Wow, centers!
(second grade)
Reading
Computers

Sample pages from Darcy Brown, Newlin Elementary School, Burlington, NC

Showcase your strengths.

Include samples of your original ideas that demonstrate your creativity, show your ability to reach children on all levels, or give others an idea of your commitment to education.

Keep your reader interested.

Use active language and avoid jargon and acronyms. Make your portfolio fun to look at by adding stickers and using brightly colored paper.

Periodically clean it out.

Items you chose to include originally may not seem as important anymore. When you have your students sort through their portfolios to choose their very best work, do the same with yours. Keep in mind your portfolio's purpose when making your choices.

Pick a portfolio pal.

Need some motivation for getting your portfolio started? Pair up with a friend and work on your portfolios together. You're sure to have more fun that way!

How can you learn more?

Check out examples of electronic portfolios at http://teach.virginia.edu/curry/class/edlf/589_004. Click on "Students' Electronic Teaching Portfolios."

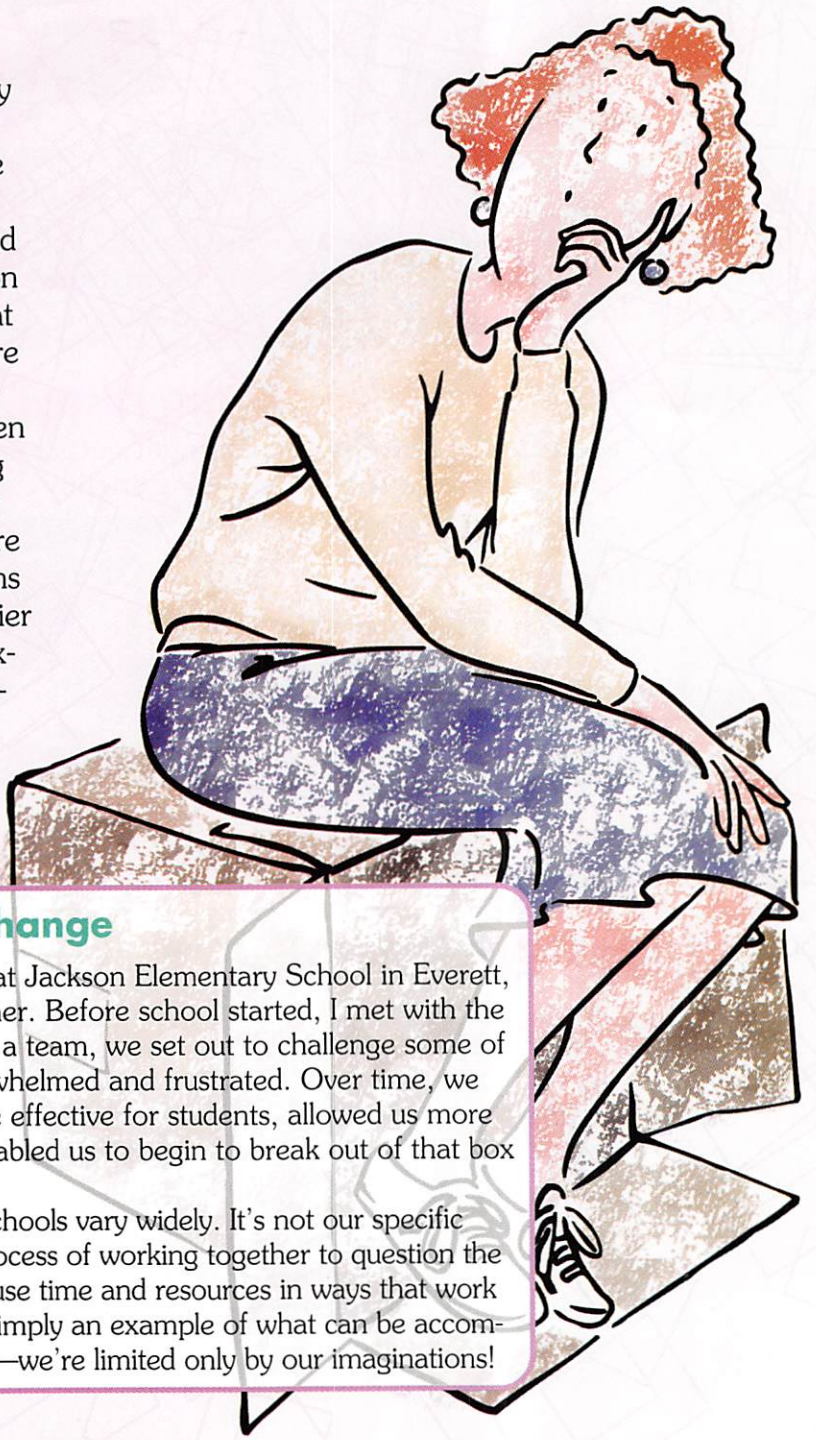
Special thanks to the following teachers for helping with this article:
Alisa Anderson, Littleton School, Parsippany, NJ
Colleen Dabney, Williamsburg Christian Academy, Williamsburg, VA
Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI
VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE
Kristin Robertson, Pointers Run Elementary, Clarksville, MD

Sometimes It Pays To Think OUT Of the BOX

Solving The Problem Of Too Much To Do In Too Little Time

by Terry Chadsey, Jackson Elementary School, Everett, WA

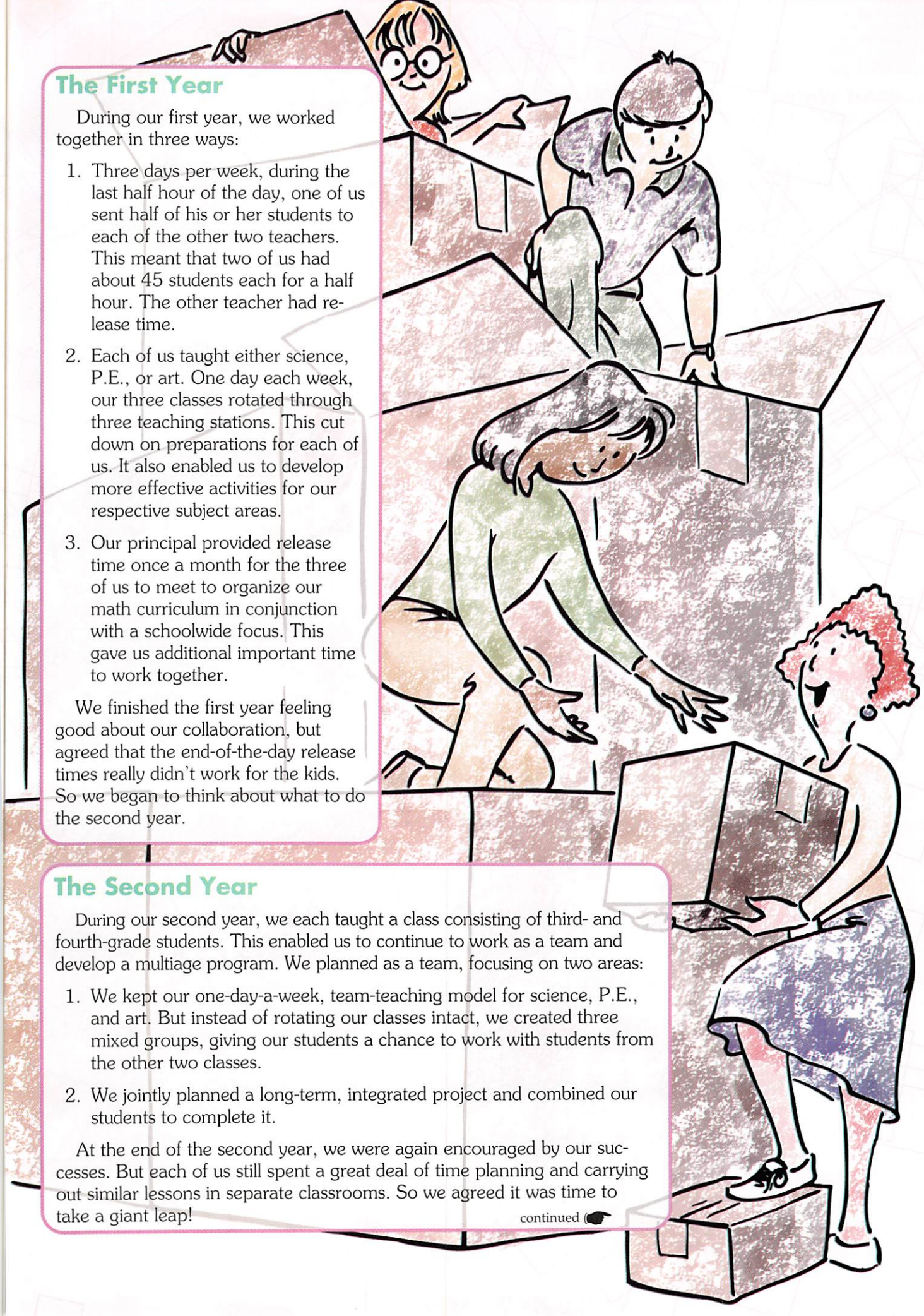
It's popular these days to ask, "Why aren't schools more like they used to be?" Given the pace of change in the world around us, we should ask, "Why are schools *still* so much like they used to be?" And when you think about it, the reason is usually that "it's always been that way." Although many traditions are supported by state law and district and/or school policy, they are often unquestioned to the point of being unquestionable—not because they are mandated, but because they are etched deeply into our expectations of a real school. The greatest barrier to improving schools? Our own expectations. We need to start thinking out of the box.



Setting The Stage For Change

Four years ago, I joined the staff at Jackson Elementary School in Everett, Washington, as a fourth-grade teacher. Before school started, I met with the other two fourth-grade teachers. As a team, we set out to challenge some of the traditions that often left us overwhelmed and frustrated. Over time, we developed a program that was more effective for students, allowed us more time to plan fewer activities, and enabled us to begin to break out of that box of traditional practice.

Of course, teachers, teams, and schools vary widely. It's not our specific program that's important; it's the process of working together to question the unquestioned and exploring how to use time and resources in ways that work better for students. Our program is simply an example of what can be accomplished. The possibilities are endless—we're limited only by our imaginations!



The First Year

During our first year, we worked together in three ways:

1. Three days per week, during the last half hour of the day, one of us sent half of his or her students to each of the other two teachers. This meant that two of us had about 45 students each for a half hour. The other teacher had release time.
2. Each of us taught either science, P.E., or art. One day each week, our three classes rotated through three teaching stations. This cut down on preparations for each of us. It also enabled us to develop more effective activities for our respective subject areas.
3. Our principal provided release time once a month for the three of us to meet to organize our math curriculum in conjunction with a schoolwide focus. This gave us additional important time to work together.

We finished the first year feeling good about our collaboration, but agreed that the end-of-the-day release times really didn't work for the kids. So we began to think about what to do the second year.

The Second Year

During our second year, we each taught a class consisting of third- and fourth-grade students. This enabled us to continue to work as a team and develop a multiage program. We planned as a team, focusing on two areas:

1. We kept our one-day-a-week, team-teaching model for science, P.E., and art. But instead of rotating our classes intact, we created three mixed groups, giving our students a chance to work with students from the other two classes.
2. We jointly planned a long-term, integrated project and combined our students to complete it.

At the end of the second year, we were again encouraged by our successes. But each of us still spent a great deal of time planning and carrying out similar lessons in separate classrooms. So we agreed it was time to take a giant leap!

continued ☛

Students were grouped differently.

1. We created one large class: three teachers and about 90 kids.

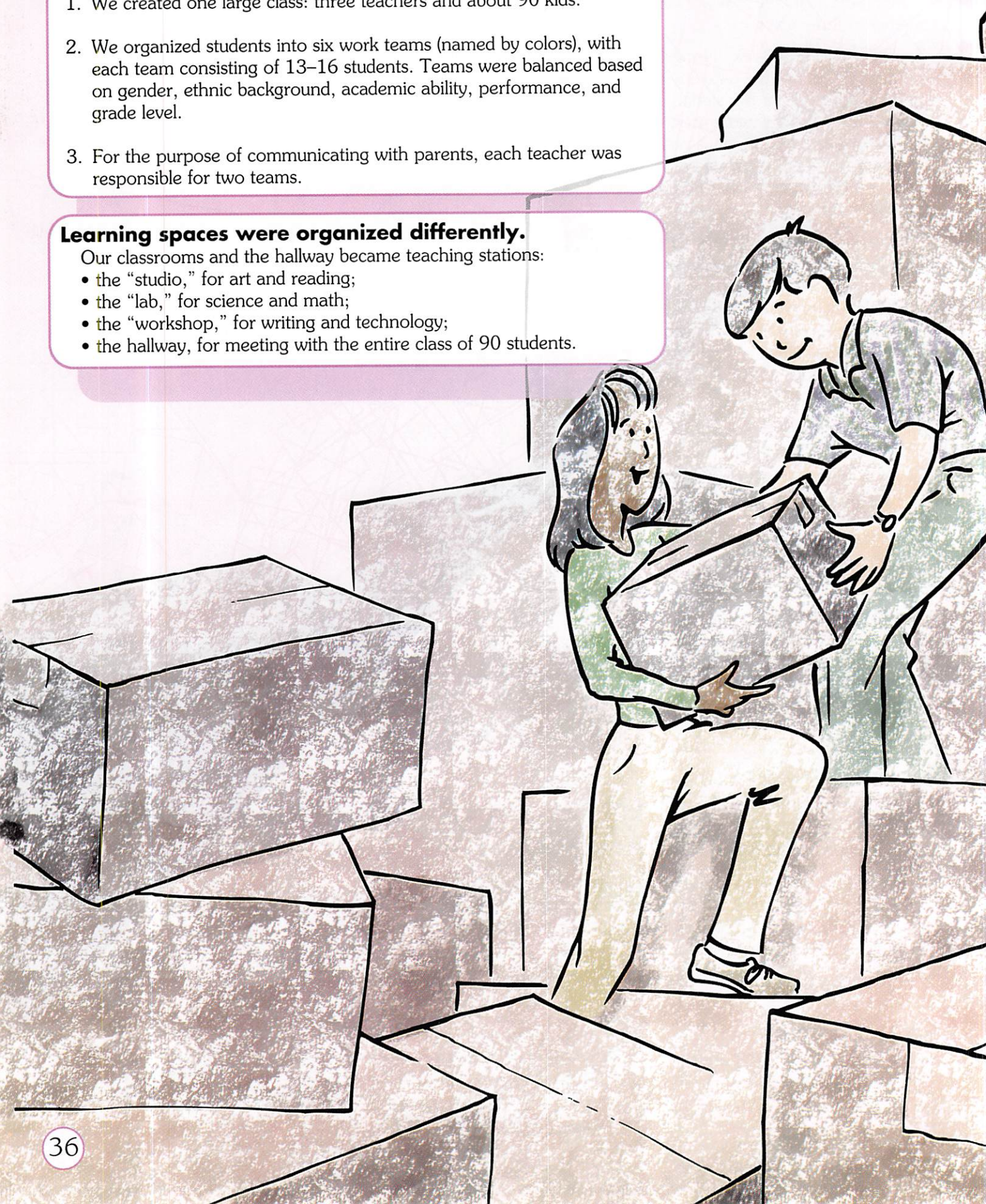
2. We organized students into six work teams (named by colors), with each team consisting of 13–16 students. Teams were balanced based on gender, ethnic background, academic ability, performance, and grade level.

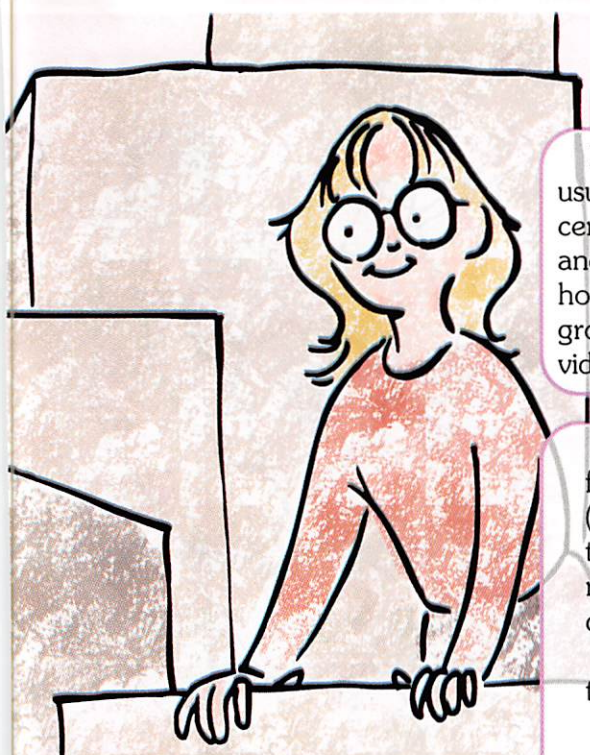
3. For the purpose of communicating with parents, each teacher was responsible for two teams.

Learning spaces were organized differently.

Our classrooms and the hallway became teaching stations:

- the "studio," for art and reading;
- the "lab," for science and math;
- the "workshop," for writing and technology;
- the hallway, for meeting with the entire class of 90 students.





The schedule was different.

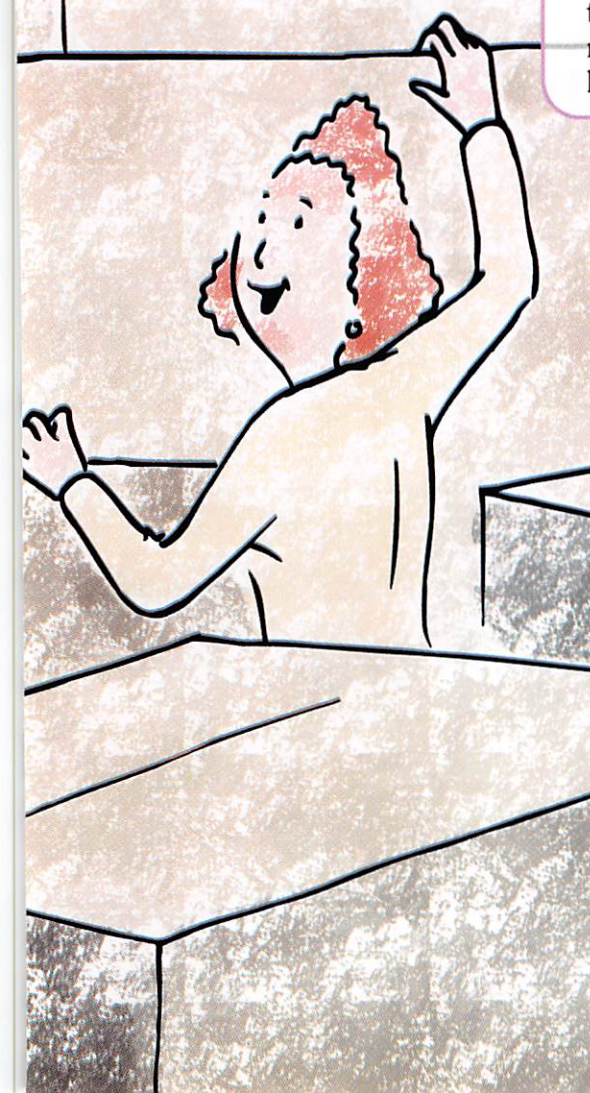
In the morning, our schedule was flexible but usually followed a pattern. We met to share concerns, plans, and information. We took attendance and lunch counts and collected forms returned from home. One teacher did these tasks with the large group, thus freeing the other two to talk with individual students or to finish last-minute preparations.

After the group meeting, two teams met in one teaching station for an hour, then rotated to the other two stations for an hour each. (For example, the red and blue teams first met in the workshop. Then they moved to a second station, as the purple and orange teams arrived. After an hour, they moved on, and the green and yellow teams came to the workshop.)

There were numerous advantages to this rotation system. Each teacher

- focused on one curriculum area,
- taught the same lesson three times a day,
- could adjust activities to meet the needs of each set of students.

In addition, each class at our school has two 45-minute sessions per week with a music specialist. During these sessions, the classroom teachers have planning time. We scheduled our music sessions during our morning rotations. All 90 students had music during the time they usually spent in the workshop, for example, and each of us had extended release time twice every three weeks. For example, on my music day, I would escort the three groups to and from music, and have more than two hours of release time.



In the afternoon, we scheduled three teams to go to the lab with one teacher, while the other three teams worked in the workshop with another teacher. We used this time for silent reading and skill-development activities that work easily with large groups: spelling, handwriting, and math facts, for example. Since we also used this time to schedule teams and individual students into other activities (team meetings, computer lab, library, resource rooms, D.A.R.E., etc.), the two teachers almost never had three entire teams. We ended the day reading aloud to the entire class in the hallway. We had quickly realized that one teacher (or one student) could read to all 90 students just as easily as each of us could read in separate classrooms.

The changes we made during the third year gave each of us considerably *more* release time—and *fewer* subjects to plan for. We used the extra time to facilitate team meetings, to work with individual students or small groups, to call parents, and to plan. All of this was accomplished with teamwork and required no additional resources.

continued ☛

The Fourth Year

During our fourth year, we made two significant changes:

1. Our school reorganized student support services. Instead of pulling kids out for special classes, our support staff was assigned to work with teaching teams. This meant a fourth teacher joined our team!

2. Each of us stayed in one teaching station throughout the year. We felt we would do our best for our students if we concentrated on one area.

We completed our fourth year convinced that we had created a stronger, more effective program. For each of us, there was no going back! The benefits included the following:

- Combining the ideas and resources of three or four teachers led to more creative and comprehensive units.

- Focusing more individual planning and preparation on fewer curriculum areas enabled us to develop more effective activities.

- Rotating teams enabled us to examine our own instruction. Our individual assessments suggested that this led to greater student achievement.

- We had more than one perspective on each student. We found that we each knew every child in our group. As we discussed concerns about students, we developed a more thorough picture of problems, thus generating a wider range of solutions.

- Each day, students interacted with a greater number of their peers. There were more leaders and positive role models.

- Moving students into different areas to work with different teachers led to fewer disciplinary issues—an impact of our program that we had not anticipated. Whenever a student and teacher were at odds, it wasn't long before that student would move to another station. This meant that the student had a physical break by moving to another teaching area, plus the opportunity to work with a different adult. Students and teachers constantly had "breaks" from each other!

Can It Work For You?

Our program suggests several criteria for breaking out of the box of traditional practice:

- The principal must be willing to take risks, support innovation, and express that support to parents, district administrators, and other staff.

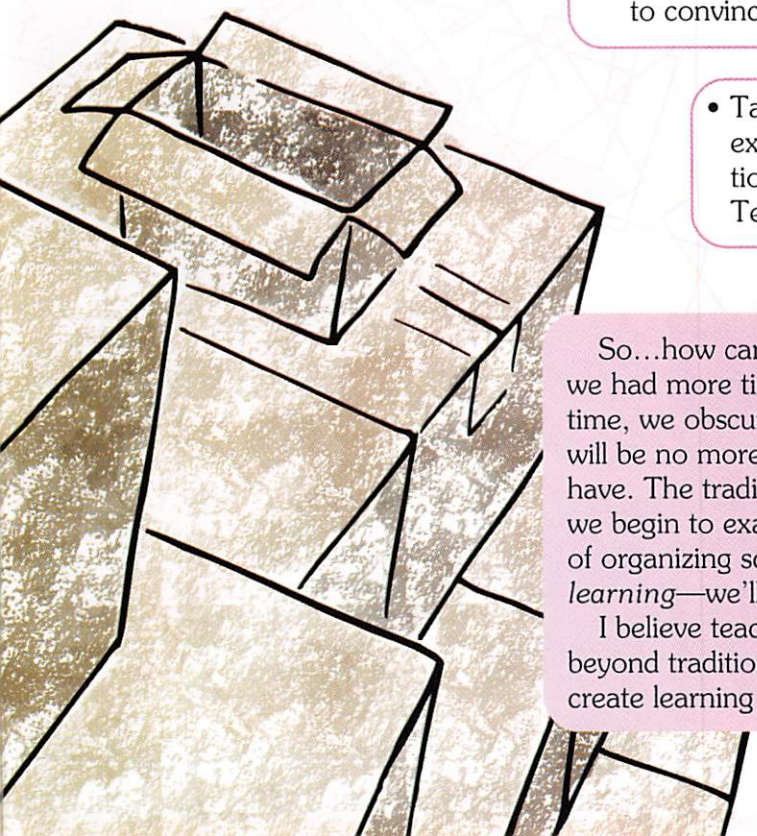
- You must start slowly. Effective change takes time. Teamwork depends on working relationships built on trust and mutual respect. Change small things first; then build on what is successful.

- When trying something new, be willing to acknowledge when it doesn't work. Changing what we do means taking risks, learning from our experiences, and moving on. Be willing to raise questions without having the answers. Isn't that what we want our students to do? What better approach than to model this!

- Keep parents informed. Share why you are looking at doing things differently. Listen to their questions and concerns. We found parents to be very supportive when they understood what we were doing and why. Parents may be suspicious at first because reorganizing the school day violates their traditional expectations of school. Those suspicions evaporate when parents observe positive changes in their children's learning and attitudes.

- Collect data about the program's impact on students. Assessing student learning in innovative programs is critical if we want to convince others of their merit.

- Take time to teach and reteach routines to students. They expect school to work a certain way. If we change traditions, we must teach kids what we expect them to do. Teaching new and complicated routines will ensure success.



So...how can we do a better job of improving student learning? If only we had more time! But if we continue to blame problems on a lack of time, we obscure the real solutions. There are 24 hours in a day; there will be no more time! We must look carefully at how we use the time we have. The traditions of schooling largely determine how we use time. If we begin to examine those traditions critically and explore different ways of organizing school programs—*with the focus on improving student learning*—we'll suddenly find ourselves out of the box!

I believe teachers hold the keys to improving schools. It's time to look beyond traditional practices. We can use our creativity and innovation to create learning programs that truly meet every child's needs.

Teacher Bulletin Board

Looking for pen pals? Want to exchange postcards? Seeking a special lesson plan? Post those requests—and more—here!

Postcard Exchanges

Each week my preschoolers study a different state and country. We'd love to get postcards from all over the world! We'll send one in return. Michelle Mayberry, 7542 29th St., Sacramento, CA 95822.

Attention, third-grade teachers: My class would like to trade postcards with your class. Contact us! Julie Mulady, Edith Baillie Elementary, 1124 North Findley, Saginaw, MI 48601.

My kindergartners are learning about national landmarks. Share your state pride by sending us a postcard with a description of a state landmark from a student's point of view. We'll respond! Nooneh Kradjian, John Muir Elementary School, 912 South Chevy Chase Dr., Glendale, CA 91205.

Help my third graders learn about landforms by sending us a postcard showing a landform. We'll send you one in return! Cheryl Anderson, 14950 Hanson Blvd. NW, Andover, MN 55304.

My third graders would love to receive a postcard from your state. We'll reply! Mary Kampa, SPPM Primary School, 30th Ave. and 9th St. N, St. Cloud, MN 56303.

My third and fourth graders are learning about communities in social studies. We'd love to receive a postcard from you. Perhaps we could become pen pals too! Rosanne Tesch, Rte. 1, Box 264, Henderson, MN 56044.

Pen Pals

Some of the patients in our 39-bed convalescent home don't have families and don't receive much mail. I'd like to start a pen-pal program—I know they'll enjoy receiving letters and pictures from your students. Let's discuss the possibilities. Danette Krause, Activity Director, Devonshire Oaks, 3635 Jefferson Ave., Redwood City, CA 94062.

My fifth graders would like to exchange letters with your students. Let's share experiences! Tony Caputo, S. C. Johnson Elementary School, 2420 Kentucky St., Racine, WI 53405.

Forget the pen—let's be e-mail pals! My third- through fifth-grade ESL students are eager to correspond. Dina Brulles, Schafer Elementary, dbrulles@aol.com.

Let's be electronic pen pals. My fourth and fifth graders are in a year-round school in San Diego, California. Teri Norris, AACTchnTDN@aol.com.

My Georgia fourth graders would like to hear from your students. Tell us about your region and school—and anything else you'd like us to know! Jean Cowart, Bulloch Academy, 873 Westside Rd., Statesboro, GA 30458.

Let's get the letters started from your one-room schoolhouse to ours! We have 12 students in grades 1–8. Let's also correspond teacher-to-teacher. Peggy Norris, 2526 Goliad Rd., San Antonio, TX 78223.

Check our Web site for more notices:

Special Education

I teach severely mentally and physically challenged students, ages 10 and up. I'd like to correspond with other teachers who work with similar students. Let's share ideas, conference news, current trends, and support! Jackie Beattie, 37 Hallock Rd., East Quogue, NY 11942; Bob@fit-ed.com.

Preschool Teachers

I teach two-year-olds at Saltsburg Daycare in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania. Please share your ideas, joys, and frustrations regarding your own work with these terrific twos. What keeps you going? What drives you crazy? If possible, send a picture of yourself and your class. Narice Ann May, 110 Butler Ave., Avonmore, PA 15618.

Special Topics

My middle school is starting an Explor-A-Bloc program. Special-interest classes will meet three times a week for four weeks. We're looking for high-interest topics that will be fun. If you've done a similar program, please tell us what works and what doesn't. Our program will be nongraded. Colleen Dabney, Williamsburg Christian Academy, 309 Waltz Farm Dr., Williamsburg, VA 23185; DABNEY4WMB@aol.com.

Experienced special-education teacher interested in corresponding with regular and special-education teachers working in inclusion kindergarten classrooms. Let's chat via e-mail. dayle timmons, 135 34th Ave. S, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250; timmons@jax-inter.net.

Travel Hosts

Wanted: hosts for our fifth-grade travel buddy. He's a Beanie Baby® who wants to stay with your class for a week, collect information, and then be sent on his way to another class. Join the fun! Therese Durhman, 5234 Stephen Ln., Hickory, NC 28602; durhman@w3link.com.

Review Games

What games have you used successfully for reviewing skills? Please share! I teach fifth grade. Jill Tatum, 1020 Pennington Ln., Ruston, LA 71270; tater@bayou.com.

World History And Geography

I'm searching for ideas to teach sixth-grade world history and geography. We're focusing on comparing past civilizations to today's world, including comparing governments and economies. Please share your suggestions! Cami Tidwell, Wunderlich Intermediate School, 11800 Misty Valley, Houston, TX 77066; camit@pdq.net.

Send your notice to *The Mailbox® Teacher* Bulletin Board!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____ Grade(s) Taught _____

Notice _____

_____

_____

_____

Mail: *The Mailbox® Teacher* Bulletin Board, 3515 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC 27403
Fax: (336) 547-1590 **E-Mail:** mteacher@theeducationcenter.com
Notices submitted before November 2, 1998, will be featured in our Spring 1999 issue on a space-available basis. They also may be included on our Web site.

Computers And Math

I'm looking for suggestions, ideas, and recent research about how to go beyond drill and practice to use computers in math more effectively. I teach intermediate grades. Melissa Kienzl, R.D. #3, Box 505, Kunkletown, PA 18058; eckmak@epix.net.

A Measure Of Safety

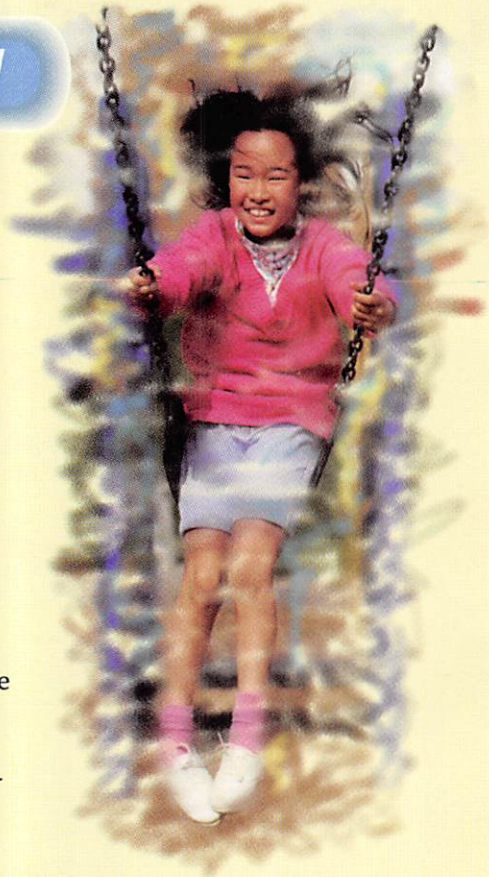
Keeping Students Safe And Sound On The Playground

Playgrounds should be places where kids can run, jump, burn off energy, and just be kids. But sadly, sometimes playgrounds are places where children get injured. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly 148,000 children visit the emergency room each year because of injuries on a public or school playground.

With a little knowledge, you can help prevent some of these injuries. Get a notebook and tape measure; then use the information that follows to begin evaluating your playground's safety. If you find problems, bring them to your principal's attention immediately. Also suggest your school form a playground safety committee to periodically examine the equipment and make suggestions on how to keep kids safe.

Here's what the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends you watch for:

1. *Starting from the ground level*



Falls are the most common way children are injured on the playground, so you'll want to be sure there's cushioning material around play equipment and adequate space between equipment. Although they're commonly used, asphalt, concrete, grass, and soil don't have good shock-absorbing abilities and shouldn't serve as cushions under play equipment. Better shock absorbers include several inches of bark mulch, wood chips, fine sand, and fine gravel. Some synthetic surfaces, such as rubber mat–style surfaces, are also acceptable.

Here's how to check the playground surface:

___ Surfaces under and around play equipment have at least 12 inches of material, such as wood chips, mulch, fine sand, fine gravel, or a synthetic surface that's been proven safe.

___ For stationary play equipment, this shock-absorbing material extends at least six feet in all directions.

___ For moving play equipment, shock-absorbing material covers the fall zone in front and back of the equipment and is at least 12 inches deep. (The fall zone extends a distance equal to twice the height of the suspending bar. For example, if the bar on the playground swings is eight feet high, the fall zone extends 16 feet in front and back of the swings.)

___ Moving play equipment has six feet of shock-absorbing material to the sides.

___ There are no exposed concrete footings, tree roots, stumps, rocks, or abrupt changes in surface that could cause a child to trip.

___ There is no trash on the ground.

Here's how to prevent collisions and falls from playground equipment:

___ Each piece of stationary play equipment is at least nine feet away from the next piece.

___ Elevated surfaces have guardrails.

___ Swings and other moving play equipment are located safely away from other play structures. Children have room to pass from one area to another.

2. Checking the equipment

Children can easily get cut, pinched, or snagged on equipment. Check the following:

___ Equipment does not have protruding bolt ends, open S hooks (often found on swings), narrow gaps in metal hardware, splinters, or other sharp edges that could cut a child or catch a child's clothing.

___ Any ropes on equipment are anchored securely at both ends so they can't loop around a child's body.

___ Moving play equipment does not have accessible moving parts that could pinch or crush a child's finger or hand.

___ Openings between rails, ladder rungs, and platforms measure less than 3 1/2 inches or more than nine inches. (Children can get trapped in other-sized openings because they can fit their bodies but not their heads in the openings.)

Here are some other basic equipment-safety checks:

___ Swings have at least 24 inches between each seat.

___ There are no obvious problems, such as rusted equipment, chipped paint, decayed wood, deteriorated or corroded surfaces, or missing or damaged equipment parts.

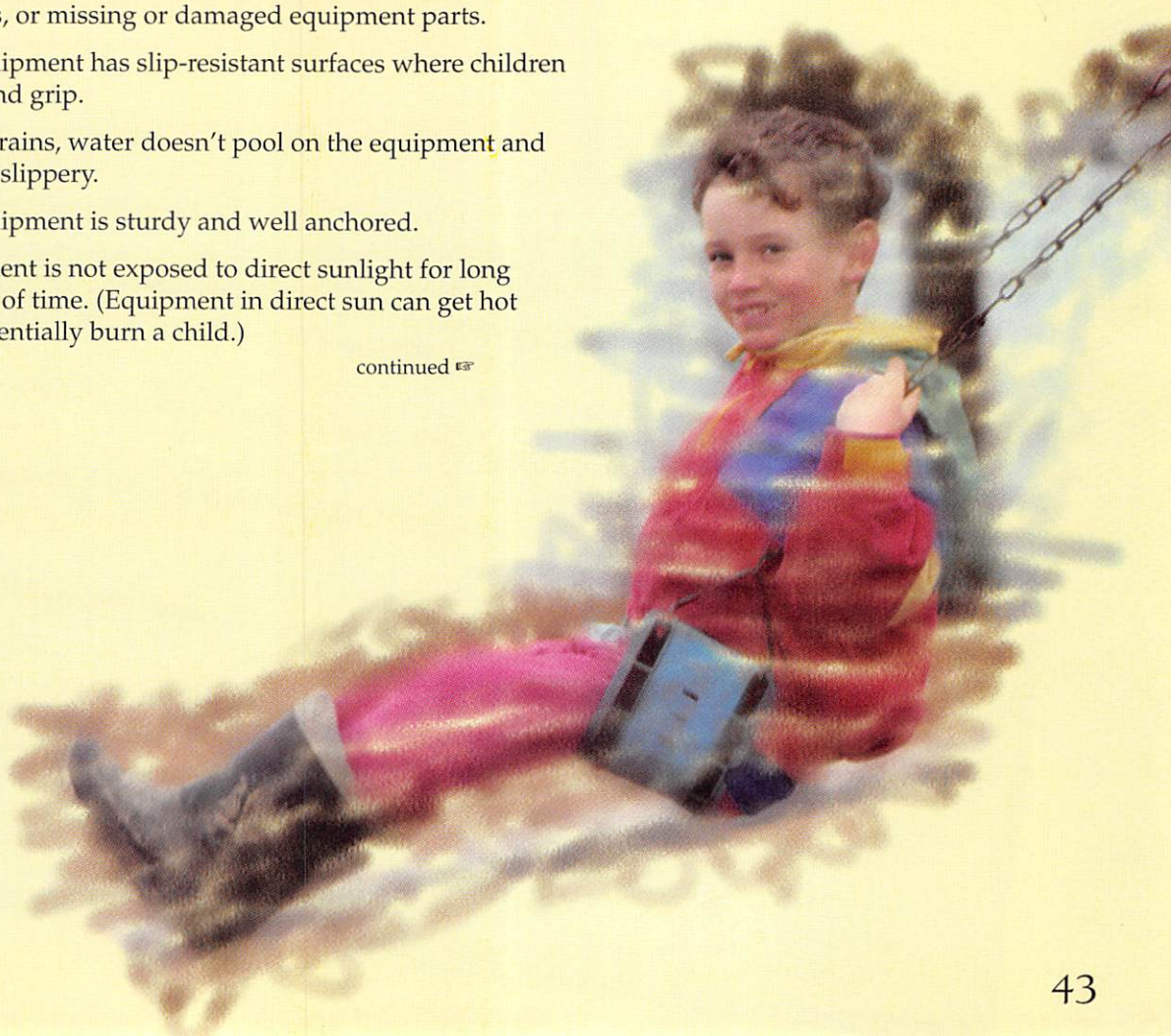
___ The equipment has slip-resistant surfaces where children climb and grip.

___ After it rains, water doesn't pool on the equipment and make it slippery.

___ The equipment is sturdy and well anchored.

___ Equipment is not exposed to direct sunlight for long periods of time. (Equipment in direct sun can get hot and potentially burn a child.)

continued ☞



3. Making rules for playground use

Take a look at your school's playground rules—they should do more than just prohibit reckless play. Consider adding the following to your school's rules:

- Children wearing clothes with attached strings, purses, scarves, necklaces, and similar items are prohibited from playing on the playground equipment. These items can get caught in equipment, leading to injury.
- Children must wear shoes that fully protect their feet and are skid resistant. Sandals and high heels aren't appropriate playground shoes.
- Children are only permitted to play on age-appropriate equipment.

Mark your calendar: National Playground Safety Day is April 22, 1999.

Did you know? Playgrounds gained popularity in the late 1800s when New York City newspaperman Jacob Riis began campaigning for play areas for children.

To Learn More

- Children's Safety Network National Injury And Violence Prevention Resource Center, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02158-1060; http://www.edc.org/HHD/csn/index.html
- National Program For Playground Safety, (800) 554-PLAY; http://www.uni.edu/playground
- National Recreation And Park Association, 22377 Belmont Ridge Rd., Ashburn, VA 20148; http://www.nrpa.org
- National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004-1707; www.safekids.org
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207. Request publication #CPSC-325, the *Handbook For Public Playground Safety* or check http://www.cpsc.gov. To report a product hazard or a product-related injury, call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Playground Roundup

Now that you've had a chance to evaluate safety on your playground, try these tips from your colleagues on keeping your playground clean and safe, putting students in a safety-oriented frame of mind, getting playground materials organized, and more.

Playground Beautiful

You can keep your playground a pleasant—and safe—place for children by having classes or grades adopt various sections. Groups will assess their sections to decide whether they need to simply keep the section clean or to improve it by planting flowers or even a butterfly garden. School pride will grow and grow! *—Terry Healy, Eugene Field Elementary, Manhattan, KS*

Safety Zones

Want to make it easier to keep an eye on your students? Consider dividing your playground into specific zones for each grade or pair of grades. Be sure equipment in each zone is age appropriate. This way you'll have a smaller area to watch; plus you'll avoid the risks of having older and younger children getting in one another's way. *—Terry Healy, Eugene Field Elementary, Manhattan, KS*

Traffic Control

Do particular pieces of popular play equipment get overcrowded? Try this: assign each grade level a day of the week to play on a particular piece of equipment. Students will be safer! *—VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE*

Cool Rules

Older students quickly get bored when it's time to learn playground rules, complaining, "But we learned those last year!" Try this to keep their interest—and to make sure they've really learned the rules. First do a quick review of the rules and give each child a copy. Then pair up older students with younger-grades buddies. Explain that the older children will

- show their partners each area on the playground
- demonstrate how to use each piece of equipment safely
- let their partners practice using the equipment safely while the older child supervises

Have the upper-grades children use the written list to ensure that they've covered all the rules.

About a month later bring the pairs back together and turn the tables by having the younger students demonstrate safe use of the equipment for their older buddies. As a finale have the older children make and present special badges to their pals that say "[Leeanne]'s Buddy [Larissa] Knows The Rules!" inserting the older and younger students' names as appropriate. *—Gail Peckumn, Rippey Elementary, Rippey, IA*

continued ☞

Be A Buddy

It's difficult—and sometimes dangerous—to have older and younger students on the playground at the same time. To prevent potential problems, pair up buddies from different grades. You'll find that the older students are eager to look out for their younger pals, creating an atmosphere of caring, responsibility, and safety for everyone! *—Pam Sauls, San Antonio,TX*

Showing And Telling

Here's another great way for older and younger students to pair up and promote playground safety: create a video that demonstrates how students should behave when following playground rules. Older students can review the rules, write the script, and plan the scenes; younger students can act out the rules on camera. All you have to do is film the production. Broadcast the video over your school's closed-circuit TV system or make it available for classes to check out and view. It's sure to get rave reviews! *—Mary Anne Duggan, Aztec Elementary, Scottsdale, AZ*

Rules Review

As the year goes by, students are likely to start forgetting various playground rules, leading to increased risk of injury. Periodically schedule Playground Powwows as a fun way to review the rules or to add new rules as necessary. These powwows work well for teaching the rules to new students, too! *—Colleen Dabney, Williamsburg Christian Academy, Williamsburg, VA*

Offering Other Options

Many playground mishaps occur because so many children are running in a small space. One way to avoid accidents is to provide some less active, but still stimulating, games and toys. Bubbles, sidewalk chalk, jump ropes, funnels for water play, a basket of musical instruments—take out several each day for no-run playground fun! *—Latresa Bray, Huber Ridge School, Westerville, OH*

Staying In Contact

A walkie-talkie can put you in touch with the school office instantly. Ask your principal or PTA to purchase a set of walkie-talkies. Then have the school secretary keep one and the teacher on playground duty take the other. Anytime you need the school nurse, another teacher, or extra help of any type, just radio the office. An added bonus is that the office can call you if a student is needed inside the building for any reason. *—Sandy Hollstegge, Whitewater Valley Elementary, Harrison, OH*

Fresh Coat Of Paint

Parents can be a big help in sprucing up your playground after the wear and tear of a long, hot summer. Work with your principal to choose a Saturday for Playground Beautification Day. At Open House or another whole-school event, put out a sign-up sheet requesting that parents help out with landscaping and painting and repairing playground equipment. Dads are especially eager! *—Cynthia Holcomb, Irion County Elementary, Mertzon, TX*

Buckling Down And Being Safe

The book *Officer Buckle And Gloria*, written and illustrated by Peggy Rathmann, provides a fun and funny way to get students thinking about safety on the playground and in everyday life. This picture book shows how students at Napville School become more interested in safety after Officer Buckle brings his acrobatic dog Gloria to school.

Read the book with your class. Then get students thinking about how Officer Buckle's safety tips affect their own lives by creating a reason-for-the-rule bulletin board. Follow these steps:

1. Have children cut lined notebook paper into fourths. You'll need two fourths for each child.

2. Ask each child to look at the book, choose a safety tip, and write it on a piece of paper. Some tips are featured in the text of the story; others are on the front cover and inside the front and back covers.

3. Next have your students write reasons it's important to follow their chosen safety tips on the second piece of notebook paper. For example, if the child's tip is "Never take other people's medicine," the student might write "It might make you sicker" and "You could be allergic to it" on the second piece of paper.

4. Finally, post these tips on a bulletin board called "Playing It Safe With Officer Buckle." Under one column entitled "Here's The Rule," post Officer Buckle's tips. Under a second column entitled "Here's The Reason," post the students' reasons for following these rules.

5. As an added touch, invite a local police officer to reread *Officer Buckle And Gloria* to your class. He or she will have students' full attention—even without a dog like Gloria!

—*Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA*

Picturing Safety

Get your students thinking about how to use playground equipment safely with this activity.

1. Divide students into small groups and assign each group a piece of playground equipment.

2. Take the groups outside and lead them in examining the playground equipment. Tell them to take special note of their assigned equipment's size, location, color, use, and so forth.

3. Upon returning to the classroom, give each group half of a piece of poster board and crayons. Ask each group to illustrate its equipment and label the drawing with the equipment's name.

4. Next have the groups brainstorm at least three key rules for safely using their pieces of equipment. Give each group another half-piece of poster board where it can list its safety tips.

5. Finally match up the pictures and rules to create a great safety-minded display!

—*Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA*

From Your Friends At The MAILBOX®

THE ALL-NEW SUPERBOOKS

• Full Color
• Over 500 Fantastic Ideas!
• Opens Flat For Easy Copying

NEW!

Everything You Need For A Super Year!

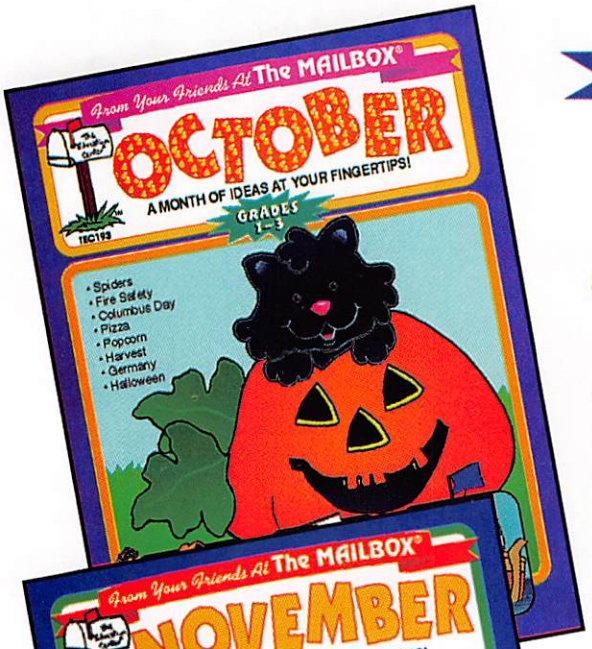
These giant 320-page books are all-new, never-before-published collections packed with unique and creative ideas to enhance and supplement all areas of the curriculum. Inside each comprehensive collection are tons of ideas for seasonal projects, classroom setup, discipline, basic skills, all subject areas, and much, much more! Patterns and reproducibles are included. Grade-specific editions include Preschool, Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5. $29.95 each.

Look For SUPERBOOKS At Your Favorite School Supply Store!

1-800-714-7991 • M–F 8 A.M.–6 P.M. ET
The Education Center, Inc. • P.O. Box 9753 • Greensboro, NC 27429-0753

25 YEARS

AMCB



From Your Friends At The MAILBOX®

A Month Of Ideas At Your Fingertips!

Here are hundreds of all-new, never-before-published ideas from the editors of *The Mailbox*® magazine. These colorful monthly resource books are overflowing with the essentials teachers need every month, including 96 pages of bulletin-board ideas, arts-and-crafts ideas, and across-the-curriculum theme units. Also included in these timesaving treasures are patterns, reproducibles, and awards. $12.95 each.

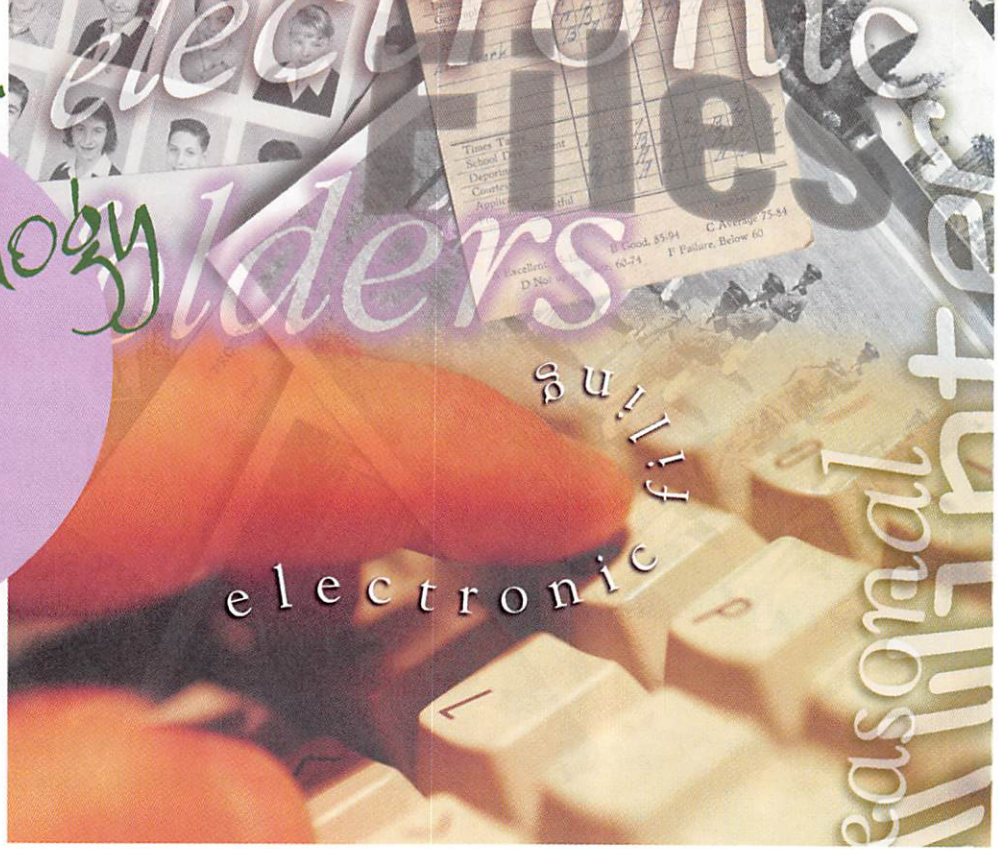
Available in three grade-specific levels—
Preschool–Kindergarten, Grades 1–3, and Grades 4–6

Look For Monthly Idea Books At Your Favorite School Supply Store!

1-800-714-7991 • M–F 8 A.M.–6 P.M. ET
The Education Center, Inc. • P.O. Box 9753
Greensboro, NC 27429-0753

25 YEARS
The Education Center®
® AMCB

Tips for Technology



Making the most of technology in your classroom

Just A Big, Fancy File Cabinet

Having trouble remembering where documents are saved on your computer? Here's help: think of your computer as a file cabinet. Create electronic folders for the months of the school year; inside each folder store copies of relevant seasonal lessons, notes to parents, conference forms, and so forth. At the beginning of each month, open the appropriate file and print the items you'll need. No more misplaced documents! Plus these electronic files will help you save space in your real filing cabinets. In case of a computer malfunction, periodically make a backup copy of these files on a disk and keep it in a safe place.

—VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE

"Wonder-full" Investigations

Kids are full of questions that they'd like to have answered. You can help them get those answers and build their computer research skills by creating a class "I Wonder…" box.

1. Decorate a box with construction paper. Label it "I Wonder…" Put pencils and paper inside.
2. Any time students come up with questions that they're curious about, tell them to write these down and put them in the box.
3. As students are scheduled for computer time or before the class goes to the computer lab, have each child refer to the box and choose a question to investigate. Discuss ways to research it, such as which search engines might be helpful, what topics to search for, which CD-ROM encyclopedias they can check, what they'll do with the information they find, and so forth.

This is a "wonder-full" way to make the research process meaningful!

—Maura Hendrickson, Kenesaw Elementary, Kenesaw, NE

78 percent of schools and 27 percent of classrooms are

Test-Driving The Computer?

Many parents would like to purchase computers and software for their children to use at home. But with the horror stories they've heard about the Internet and the many questions involved in buying a computer, some are hesitant. Here's how you can help: Throughout the year, invite parents to try out the computer hardware and software you have on your classroom computer. Explain what the children have learned to do on the computer, which programs they already know how to use, and what you like and dislike about the programs. Then let the parents explore. This makes parents' purchasing decisions easier. Your computer-savvy kids will be the big winners!

—VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE

Sites We Love

Your kids will get a kick out of creating a top-ten list of favorite Web sites. Get a small chalkboard or dry-erase board and hang it near the computer. Then, as students discover exciting sites, have them add these to the list. Once you have ten, ask a class computer committee to review, revise, and update the list each week. Also send a copy home so parents and siblings can check out these top-notch sites too.

—Maura Hendrickson Kenesaw Elementary, Kenesaw, NE

What A Site!

Our readers share some of their favorite Web sites:

- You'll find a mountain of geography information at Geography World, http://members.aol.com/bowermanb/101.html. Created by a high-school teacher, this site includes loads of information about the earth, weather, cultures, world geography, population, and more. Check it out when you're planning activities for National Geography Awareness Week, November 15–21, 1998.—*Terry Healy, Eugene Field Elementary, Manhattan, KS*
- Two other great sources for geography info are Atlapedia Online, http://www.atlapedia.com, where you can search for info about countries and view maps; and Stately Knowledge, http://www.ipl.org/youth/stateknow/, where you can find facts about the 50 states.—*Julie Eick Granchelli, W. P. Towne Elementary, Medina, NY*
- Everyone loves a freebie! And you'll find lots of them at http://compusmart.ab.ca/jmardres/free.html. Includes links, addresses, and phone numbers for requesting free books, pamphlets, posters, calendars, comic books, and more. —*VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE*
- This site offers your school a chance to earn free computer equipment! Once your school registers, you'll begin collecting empty laser and inkjet printer cartridges for recycling. Each collected cartridge earns points toward free computer equipment. Includes suggestions for linking up with local businesses to help. Check it out at www.etcep.com!

How To Give Every Child

Take a look at the numbers: say you have 25 students who enter your room at 9:05 in the morning and leave at 3:40 in the afternoon. In that time you teach math, science, social studies, health, reading, and writing. Is it possible to make personal contact with each student throughout such a day? You bet!

Take a look at the following suggestions on how you can give *every* child individual attention, *every* day!

Individual Attention

20 Simple Suggestions That Really Do Work!

by Felicia M. Arnold, Rolling Hills Primary School, Vernon, NJ

- **Greet** each student at the door. Shake his hand or pat him on the head. Ask about his bus ride to school.
- **Speak to** the board monitors as they clean the chalkboards in preparation for the day.
- Remind the closet monitor to close the doors. **Ask** how her family is doing.
- When a few students line up to go to a special class, take a moment to **chat with** each one.
- As you **check over** the math homework, ask some students how their parents handled the assignment. Did Mom understand the concept? Did the student help Dad?
- When a student fails to complete his homework, take a moment to **speak privately** with him to find out why.
- During journal-writing time, **ask** one or two students how they responded to the journal prompt.
- As your paper monitors distribute composition paper, **comment on** how promptly they are doing their job.
- While **listening to** students read orally, comment on how expressively a student reads. Ask a classmate if she also found it enjoyable.
- When pairs of students work on map skills, walk around and **join** a pair. Take part in their discussion.
- Line up five minutes early for lunch and read several **funny poems** to the class. Or give a poem to a student and ask her to read it.
- During lunchtime, **sit with** your students and ask someone about his lunch. What is it? Who made it? Does he like it?
- When your class returns from recess, **find out** what happened on the playground. Did they have fun outside? Ask a student why his face is so red!
- **Notice** students' clothing. Who is wearing similar outfits? Which T-shirts have special sports figures on them?
- While they pack up to go home, **call** some students to your desk. Ask them about their upcoming ball games, dance recitals, or soccer practices.
- **Help** someone with her bookbag. Take a moment to ask how her day was.
- As you walk down the hall to the buses for dismissal, **hold** a child's hand.
- Walk down the steps to the buses and **recap** the day's events with a student.
- Give a goodbye **hug** to any student who approaches you and wants one.
- Recognize your students and show them that they **exist** in your world. Never let them feel invisible. Take a moment to seize the moment!

Reaching Children

Ideas for helping children whose parents are divorced

Parts Of A Whole

Oftentimes grandparents play an especially important role in a child's life when the child's parents are divorced. At the beginning of the school year, besides requesting contact information for the child's mother, father, and stepparents, ask for this info for grandparents, step-grandparents, and other significant adults too. Then include grandparents and important adults on your mailing list. Send them your back-to-school introductory letter, a list of important dates during the school year, invitations to attend school programs, cards made by the child, and other helpful correspondence.

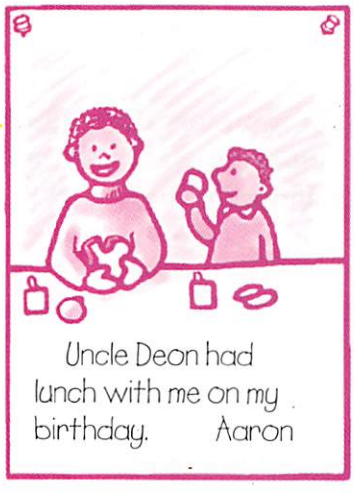
In addition, instead of having parent-teacher conferences, hold family conferences that all important adults can attend. Your extra efforts will pay off when the child receives support from the *whole* family.

—Phil Forsythe, Northeastern Elementary School, Bellefontaine, OH

Drop-In Policy

Whenever parents and other important relatives who live out of town come to visit, encourage students to invite their visitors to tour the school either before the school day starts or right after school. The guests can meet the child's teachers, see the classroom, and get a sense of how the child spends the school day. Set aside one bulletin board where students can share their pride and excitement about these visitors by writing and drawing whom they are, how long they stayed, what they did, and so forth. Out-of-town parents and relatives really appreciate this opportunity—and so do students!

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA



You cannot create genius. All you can do is nurture it.

Getting The Wording Right

Making a few changes in the way you talk to your students can go a long way toward helping children feel that their families fit in. For example:

- Instead of addressing notes "Dear Parents," address them "Dear Families."
- Instead of asking children to tell something to their parents, ask them to tell the information to "the adults who care for you."

With a little practice this alternate wording will soon roll off your tongue!

—Julie Alarie, Essex Middle School Essex, VT

The Report Is In The Mail

At the beginning of the year, explain to parents that to keep everyone better informed, you'd be happy to mail copies of a child's progress report to any parents the child doesn't live with. Gather the names and addresses. Then address one envelope for each noncustodial parent for every report-card period; file these with your report-card information. This is an easy way to remember to drop copies of progress reports in the mail so every parent receives one!

—Candi Deal, Westwood Primary School, Dalton, GA

Full File

There are lots of ways to keep noncustodial parents informed about school activities. For starters, you can:

- mail school notices to them
- send home two copies of each notice so the custodial parent can pass along a copy to the other parent
- keep a weekly or monthly file of school information. Make arrangements for the parent to pick up this file regularly. Include an occasional work sample or note about the child's progress too.

—Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI

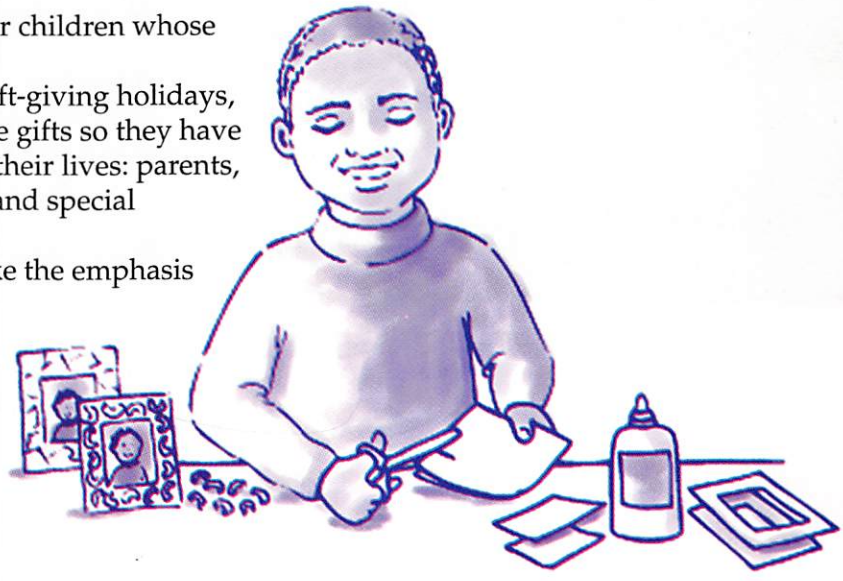
Holiday Helpers

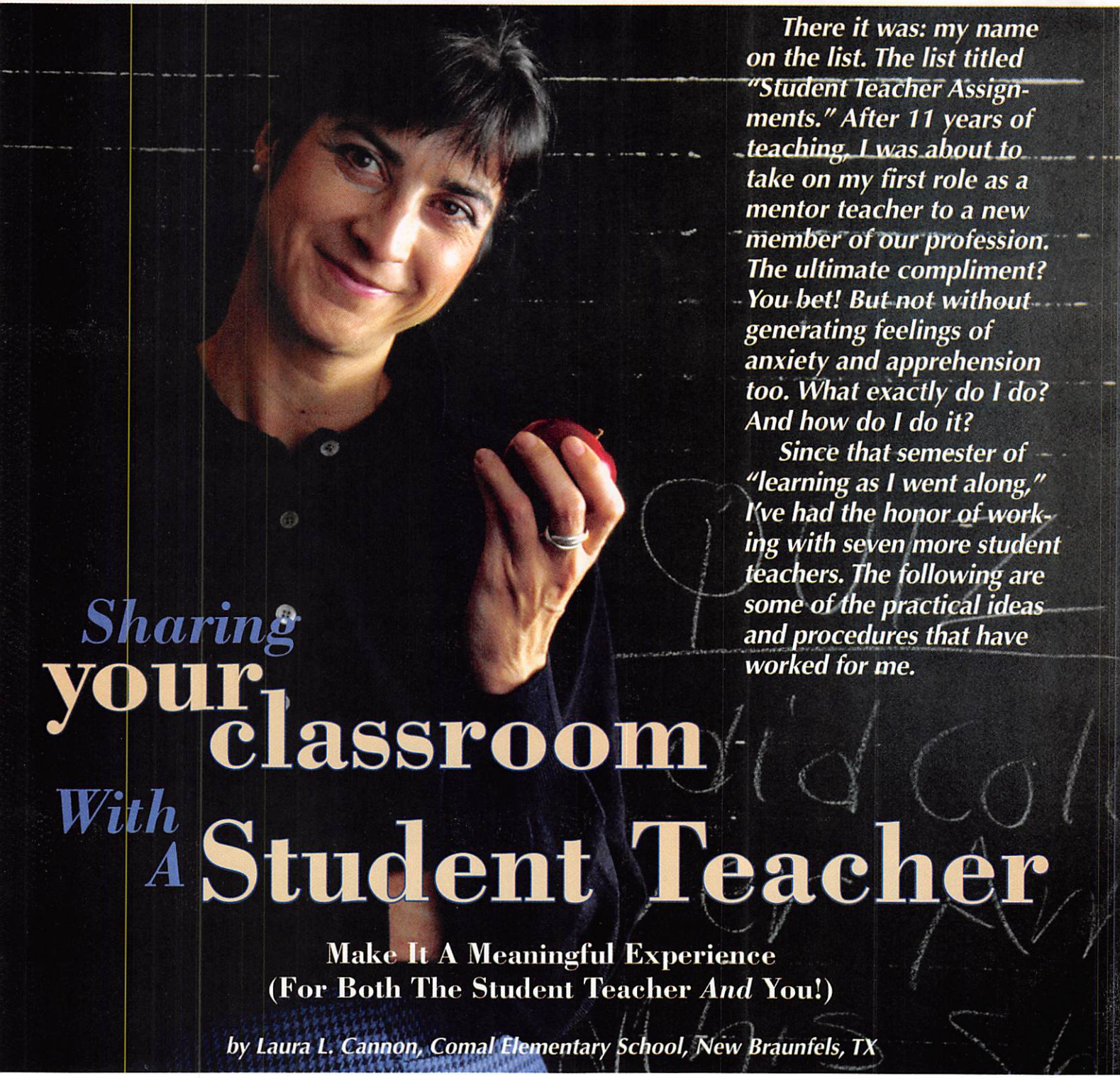
Gift-giving occasions are always tricky for children whose parents are divorced. Try this:

- For Christmas, Hanukkah, and other gift-giving holidays, give students a chance to make multiple gifts so they have one for each of the important adults in their lives: parents, stepparents, foster parents, guardians, and special caregivers.
- For Mother's Day and Father's Day, take the emphasis off parents. Instead celebrate all women and men who impact the students' lives.

By accommodating each child's needs, you can make sure children remember the fun of celebrating these holidays, not the embarrassment of having families that are different.

—Felicia M. Arnold, Rolling Hills Primary School, McAfee, NJ





Sharing your classroom With A Student Teacher

Make It A Meaningful Experience (For Both The Student Teacher *And* You!)

by Laura L. Cannon, Comal Elementary School, New Braunfels, TX

There it was: my name on the list. The list titled "Student Teacher Assignments." After 11 years of teaching, I was about to take on my first role as a mentor teacher to a new member of our profession. The ultimate compliment? You bet! But not without generating feelings of anxiety and apprehension too. What exactly do I do? And how do I do it?

Since that semester of "learning as I went along," I've had the honor of working with seven more student teachers. The following are some of the practical ideas and procedures that have worked for me.

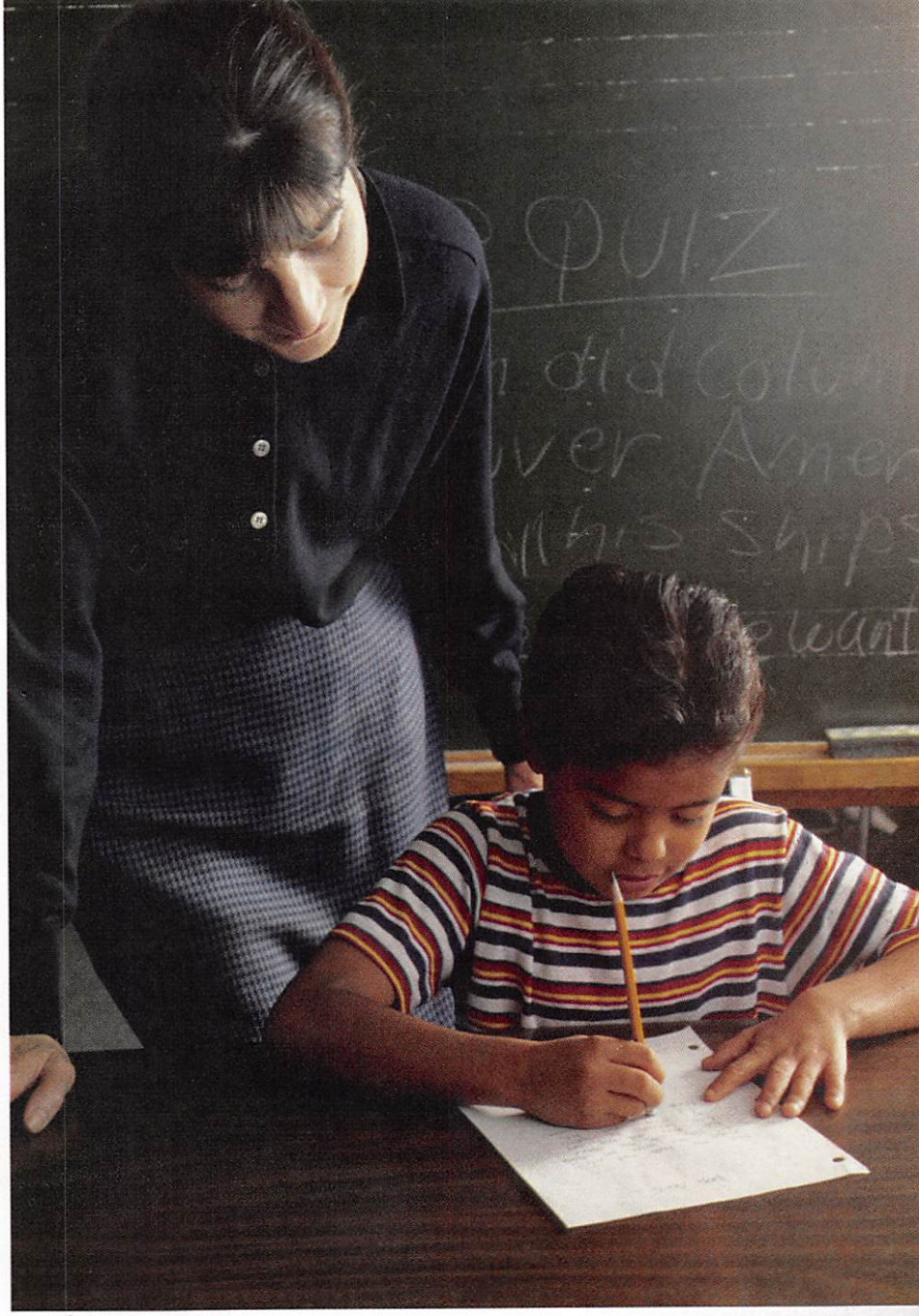
1 It's important to set the stage for success.

To help a student teacher become acquainted with her future students, I have my students write letters to her telling about themselves. Each student also includes a current photo. After students have gone through the writing process and produced their final copies, I bind the letters into a class booklet. I present this booklet to the student teacher on her first visit, which is usually a week or more before her actual teaching begins. This gives the intern time to learn a little something about each child, and to begin associating names and faces. She also has time to write responses to the children. Then the students feel a little more comfortable with this "stranger" in the classroom!

2 A student teacher is usually responsible for preparing one or two major units of study.

Together, the student teacher and I look for and decide on appropriate units early in the experience. This ensures that she will have adequate time to prepare to teach, as well as to create a portfolio for her college supervisor. The units should be ones that will not be taught until four to five weeks later—when she has taken over more responsibilities in the classroom.

We draw up a tentative plan for what subjects she will teach and set up a timetable to accomplish this. A student teacher is often apprehensive about doing everything right and needs reassurance and support to know that I don't expect her to be perfect. When I share my accumulated teaching wisdom, I include my failures as well as my successes!



3 Becoming *the* classroom teacher should be a slow and easy process.

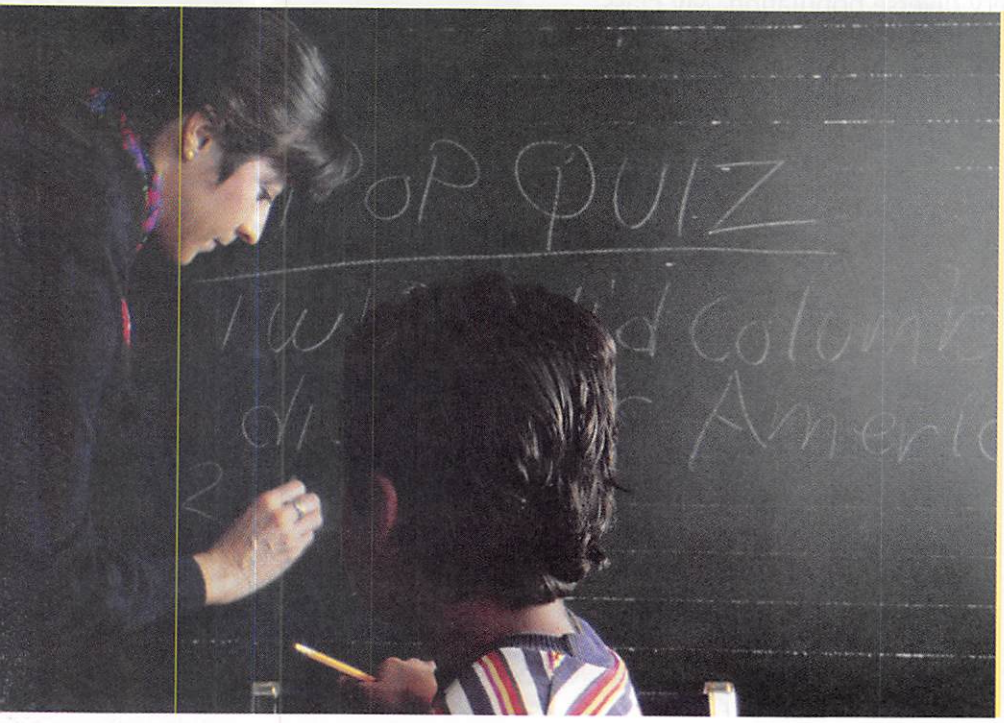
Working one-on-one with individuals or with small groups gives a student teacher immediate interaction with students. I may put my student teacher in charge of remedial work, an independent project for an advanced student, or a learning center. Other times I've divided the class into two groups. I take half and the intern takes half. We can then give similar instruction to each group, or the groups can work on different topics at the same time.

One semester, my student teacher taught a miniunit on Canada to half of the class, while I took the other half to the library to study Mexico. After learning the material, each group of students prepared to teach the other group what they had learned. A whole class of student teachers!

continued ☞

4 Discipline is usually the first big hurdle that a student teacher faces.

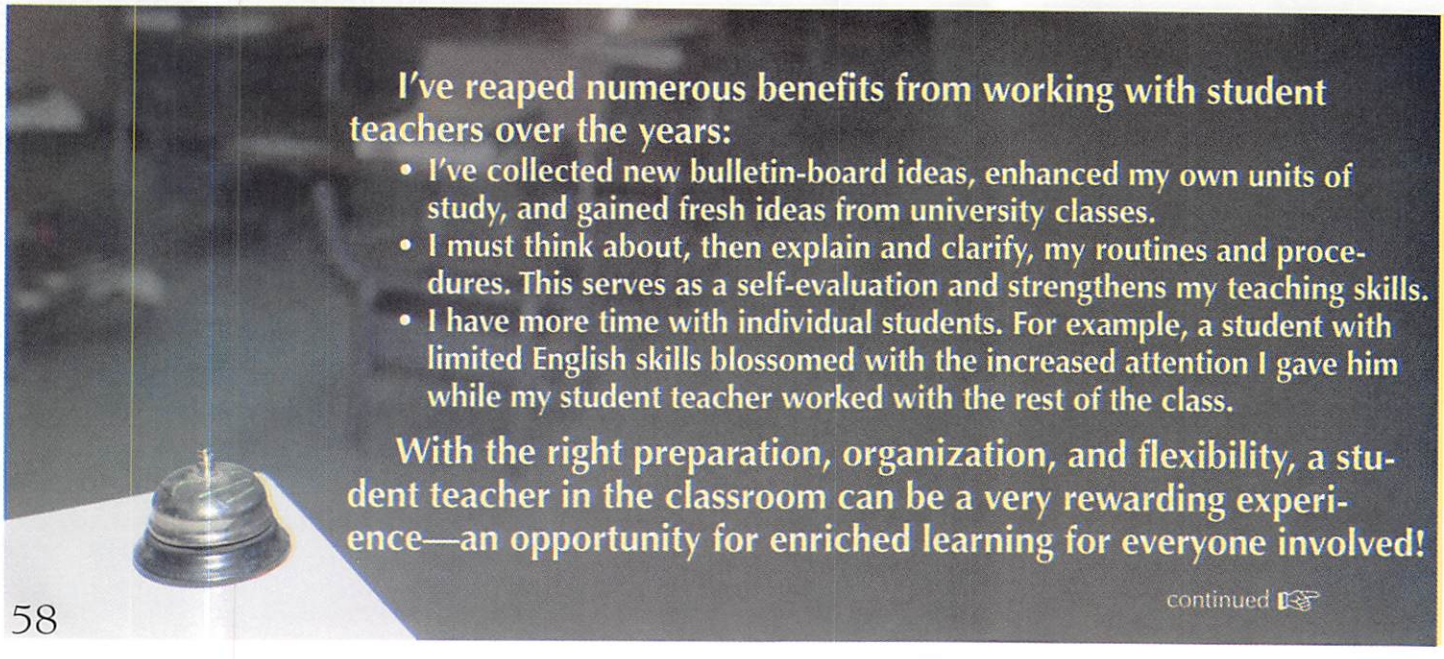
Even the most well-behaved and well-mannered children will test the waters! At the beginning of her experience, the intern and I teach together. That way the children know that established classroom rules will be enforced and routines followed. I encourage each teacher trainee to come up with her own discipline procedures and try them out. If something doesn't work, we discuss why and then modify the plan. As the student teacher assumes full responsibility for the class, I leave the classroom for longer periods of time. This frees her to teach without feeling that she is constantly being observed, plus it ensures that the children will rely on her, not me. (This is also an excellent time for me to do those things there is never time for: observe other teachers, prepare classroom materials, and even clean out a cabinet or file drawer!)



5 The most important quality a student teacher must have? The ability to relate to students in an empathetic manner.

It's important to help the student teacher gain insight into each student's learning style, and for her to interact with students in as many ways as possible.

We rotate small groups to eat lunch with us in the classroom, or allow small groups to come in at recess to work on special projects. Skills can be taught—and mastered by children—when a caring relationship has been established between the student teacher and her students, as well as between the student teacher and the supervising teacher.



I've reaped numerous benefits from working with student teachers over the years:

- I've collected new bulletin-board ideas, enhanced my own units of study, and gained fresh ideas from university classes.
- I must think about, then explain and clarify, my routines and procedures. This serves as a self-evaluation and strengthens my teaching skills.
- I have more time with individual students. For example, a student with limited English skills blossomed with the increased attention I gave him while my student teacher worked with the rest of the class.

With the right preparation, organization, and flexibility, a student teacher in the classroom can be a very rewarding experience—an opportunity for enriched learning for everyone involved!

continued ☞

interviewing A Student Teacher

To Hire Or Not To Hire: One Class's Unique Learning Experience

by Karen Wilson, McCarver Elementary, Tacoma, WA

We teach responsibility when we trust students enough to give them responsibility. One semester, I gave my multiage students unthinkable power: the responsibility to hire a student teacher!

The Place Of Employment

I teach in a magnet school with a very diverse population. My class consists of 28 third, fourth, and fifth graders. I keep the students for three years, which allows us to form a tightly knit family. I've found that the best way for a multiage class to be successful is to expect students to take on a lot of responsibility for themselves—and for each other.

The Candidate

Andy, my prospective student teacher, had observed in my classroom. He understood my emphasis on students taking responsibility. To include Andy in this family, it seemed only appropriate that he receive the students' acceptance. So Andy agreed to a "job interview" with the class.

Preparing The Interviewers

I explained to my students that Andy would like to student teach in our class—and it would be their decision to "hire" him. This meant that not only would he teach them, but they were expected to help him learn to become a good teacher. What happened when ordinary kids were given the opportunity to make an extraordinary decision? They rose to the occasion!

The Interview

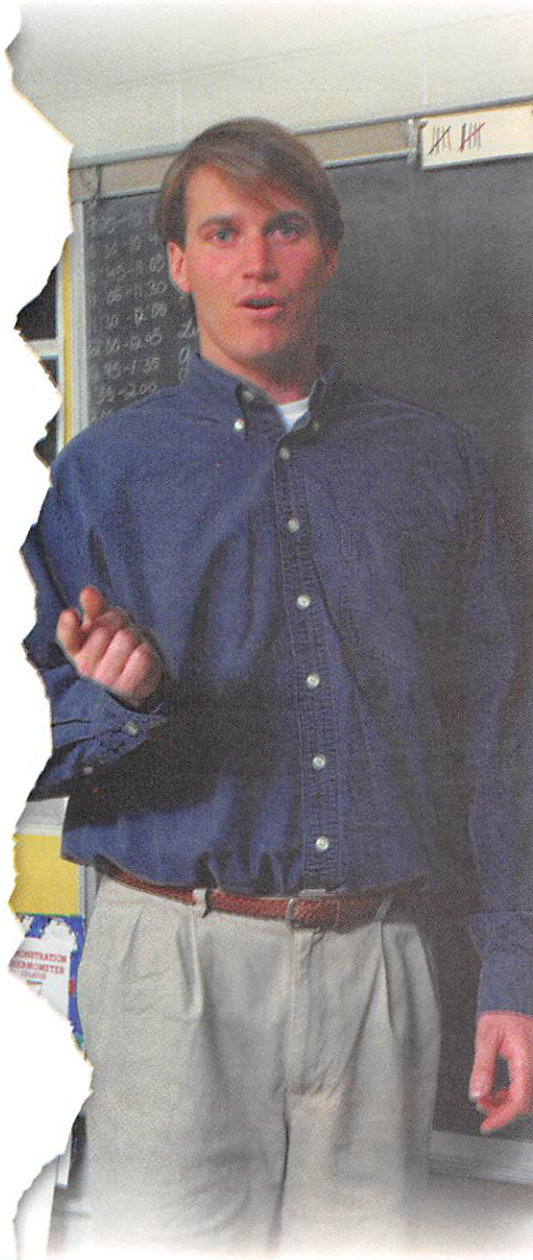
Andy arrived for his interview complete with a bag of personal items: his bike helmet, a whistle for coaching basketball, a favorite book, and pictures of his fiancée. The children's questions included the following:

- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- What makes you think you would be a good teacher?

Andy took the interview very seriously and answered all questions professionally and respectfully.

A Decision Is Made

When the interview was completed, I thanked Andy and he left. I then asked students to wrestle with this question: Should we hire him? After much genuine discussion, they unanimously agreed. A student volunteered to write a letter of acceptance. It was signed by everyone, including myself.

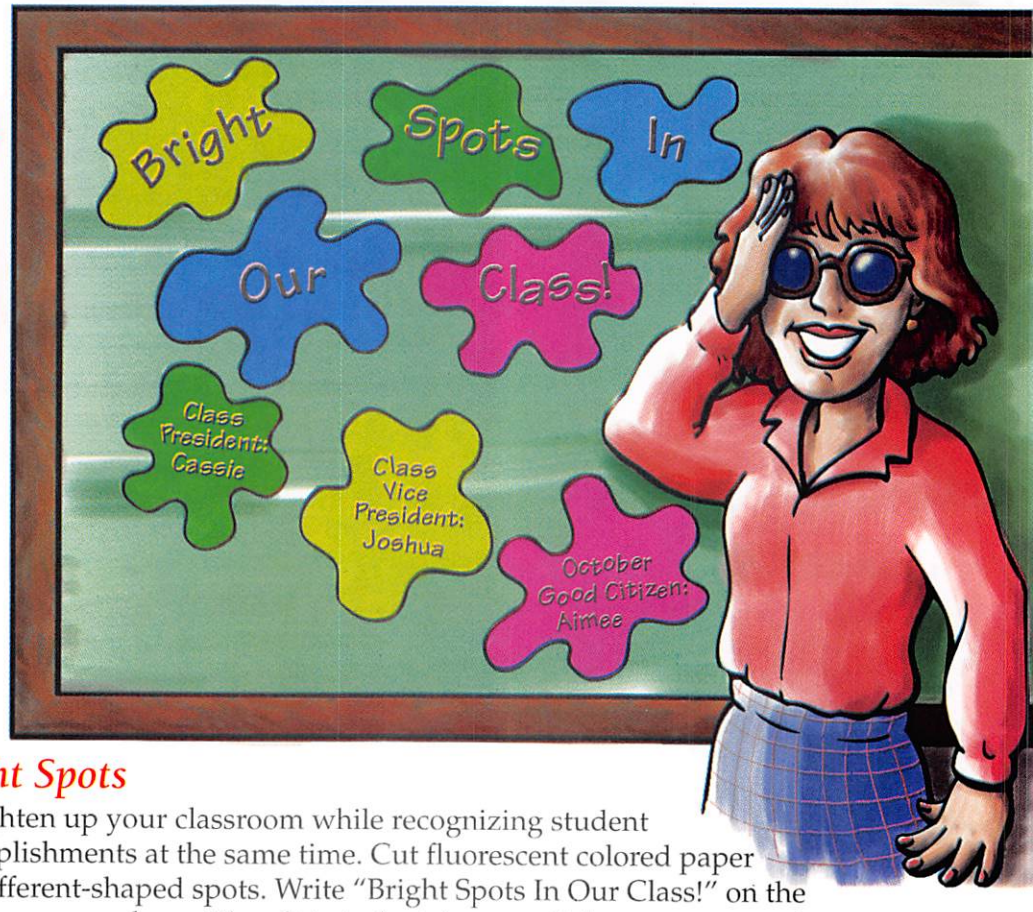


Including students in such an important decision allowed them to become participants in Andy's success. And he did beautifully!

After all, he had 28 miniature—but great—teachers! ●

Our Readers Write

About classroom tips and timesavers



Bright Spots

Brighten up your classroom while recognizing student accomplishments at the same time. Cut fluorescent colored paper into different-shaped spots. Write "Bright Spots In Our Class!" on the shapes, one per shape. Then list students' accomplishments or awards on additional spots. Display them around the classroom to let everyone know who is shining!

—Cathy Ogg, Happy Valley Elementary, Johnson City, TN

Clapping For Attention

Often I need to get students' attention to give directions, ask a question, or make an announcement during times of noise and activity in the classroom. I use this clapping technique so that I don't have to raise my voice. I stand in front of the room and clap a short rhythm. Those students who notice stop what they're doing and clap the rhythm back to me. I then clap a different rhythm that the students listen to and repeat back to me. Each time, more students hear the clapping and respond. This continues a few more times until all the students have heard the clapping, realize that I need their attention, and clap the final few rhythms in unison. I praise those students who listen carefully and can clap the rhythm back accurately. Students really love the challenge of long, complicated rhythms. In just a few moments, I have a roomful of silent, attentive students eager to listen!

—Jacqueline Kremer, Bozrah, CT

The Latest And Greatest

Attach folders—one per grade level—to a bulletin board in your faculty room. As you and your co-workers come across good teaching ideas, make a copy of each one and put it in the appropriate folder. Also post upcoming conferences, teachers' birthdays, and weekly inspirational quotes on the board. Title the bulletin board "The Latest And Greatest At [your school's name]!"

—Nicole Iacovazzi, Owego Elementary, Owego, NY

Welcome To Our Classroom!

Do you often have drop-in visitors? A little preparation will ensure that you're always ready for them! I welcome each visitor and introduce him to the class. If we're busy at the moment, I direct the visitor to come in, make himself comfortable, and look around the classroom at the students' work and ongoing projects. I then direct the visitor to a small box near the door labeled "Welcome, Visitors!" This box includes:

- a folder with a letter and a brief overview of the classroom
- a comment and question sheet for the visitor to complete
- a page titled "Can You Help?" on which the visitor lists talents, hobbies, and careers that he can share with the class
- a "To Do" folder (If the visitor can stay a while, there are always lots of small things that he can do to get more involved in the classroom!)

Visitors always feel welcome in my classroom. Plus I don't lose valuable teaching time trying to accommodate them.

—Donna Slaughter, Ellettsville Christian Academy, Ellettsville, IN

Circulating Library

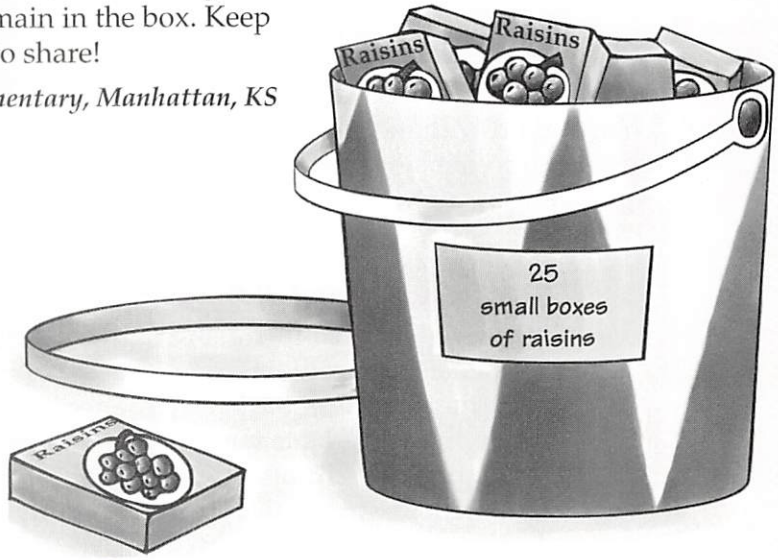
Circulate new ideas and help boost your colleagues' skills—and morale—with a circulating library. Set up a box in the teachers' work area. Solicit a volunteer to maintain the box; then ask staff members to share both professional and popular magazines, bestsellers, and recipes. Set rules for use of the items, such as when or if they are to be returned to the original owner and how long certain items will remain in the box. Keep the box attractive and remind the faculty to share!

—Terry Healy, Eugene Field Elementary, Manhattan, KS

Paper Saver

To cut down on the amount of paper we use for handwriting practice, I make my own transparencies for numeral- and letter-formation practice. I simply use the copier to duplicate a practice sheet onto transparencies, one per student. Students then use wipe-off markers to complete the activities. This allows for more one-on-one instruction and enables me to correct any improper formations as students make them. After I evaluate their work, students clean the transparencies. I file all the transparencies to use with future classes.

—Debbie Kubiszyn, Blasdell Elementary, Blasdell, NY



Snack Buckets

Snacktime is very important to second graders! However, getting snacks for the entire class is often a challenge. Our solution? We collected five 2-gallon-sized ice-cream buckets with handles and lids. Each Friday we send the five buckets home with five students. (The next Friday, five other students take a turn.) We label each bucket with our request and the amount/number of a snack item needed. On the following Monday, parents return the buckets filled with our students' snacks. That's one less thing for us to plan for!

—Anne Elliott and Lisa Fischer, Pierce Elementary, Fort Knox, KY

continued

Our Readers Write

Private Spaces, Quiet Places

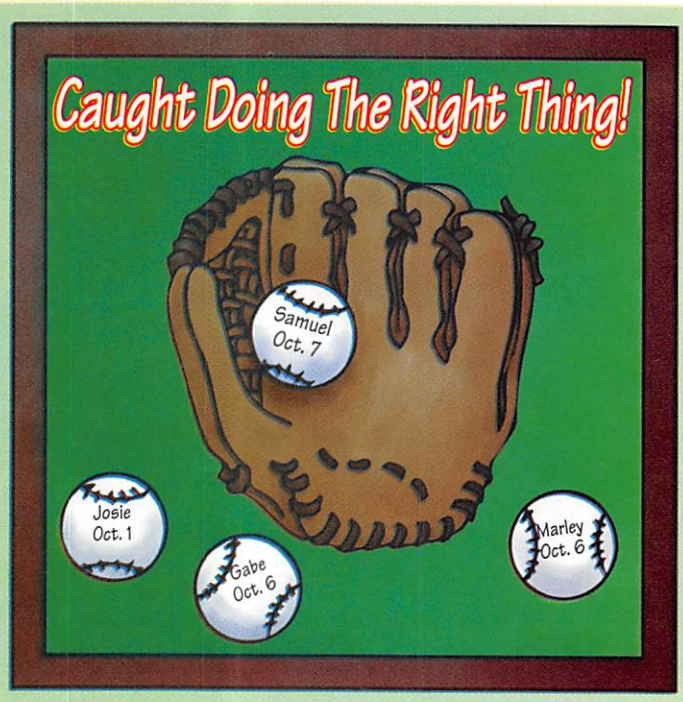
This idea really works for those times when I want students to have privacy at their desks. I collected those cardboard boxes that big books are packed and shipped in. (Ask your librarian to save them for you.) I cut each box in half, widthwise, then covered it with Con-Tact® covering. This created a trifold wall for a student's desk. Students keep the folded-up pieces in their desks and use them when they're taking tests, or when they just want privacy while working or reading independently. Since they are kept in students' desks, students are free to use them whenever they feel the need.

—Anna Kellum, Forest Hills, Elementary, Walterboro, SC

Caught Doing The Right Thing!

This motivating behavior plan gives students the opportunity to share their successes with our school's assistant principal. Each teacher has a large baseball-glove pattern displayed in her classroom. Whenever a student is caught doing the right thing (working quietly, following classroom rules, completing work on time, etc.), the teacher gives that student a hall pass. The hall pass is a cut-out baseball glove holding a baseball. The student then takes his hall pass to the assistant principal's office. After congratulating the student for his achievement, the assistant principal writes the student's name on a baseball cutout and dates it. The student takes his baseball back to the classroom and attaches it near the glove pattern. When a student earns five baseballs, he's invited to have lunch or dessert with the assistant principal. Now that's catching 'em being good!

—Sue Kotchman, Shore Acres Elementary, Pinellas County, FL



Bulletin-Board Brigade

Designate one bulletin board in your classroom to be designed and created each month by a group of students. First prepare slips of paper with the months of the year written on them and place them in a bag. Then divide students into groups—one group for each month. Have a student in each group randomly pick a slip of paper from the bag. This is an excellent cooperative-learning activity for your students—plus it relieves you of one classroom duty.

—Deb Delisle, Kent, OH

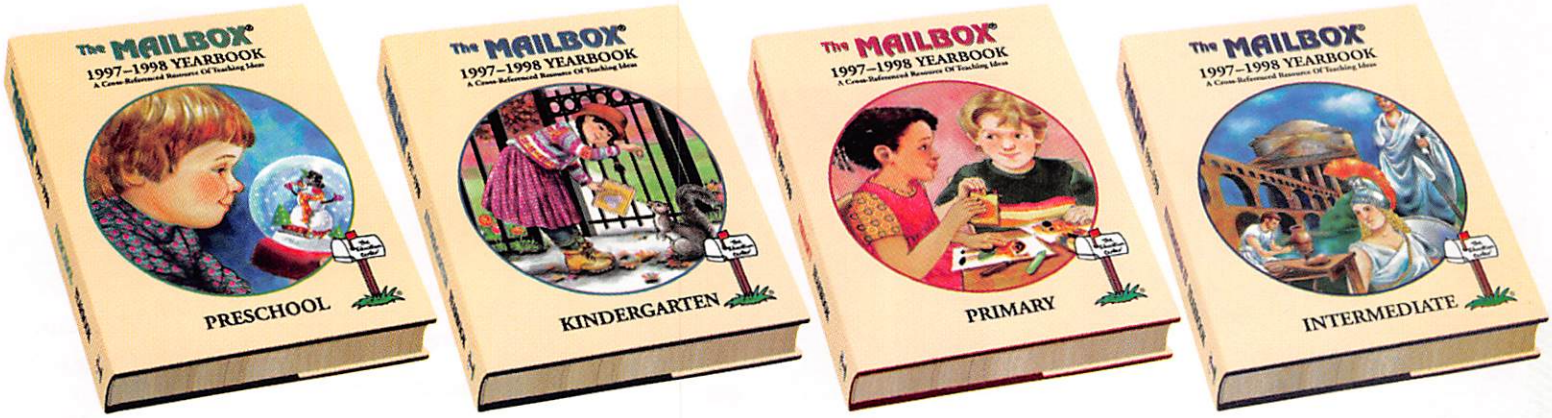
Classroom "Refrigerator"

I give out lots of student awards, mostly photocopied from reproducible books. Students color their awards, then return them to me. I've set aside an entire wall in the classroom where I display these awards and call that wall our refrigerator. This is especially eye-catching at Open House! At the end of a grading period, I take down all the awards and place them in students' report-card envelopes to take home. Students love this special recognition that they get, and the awards are especially appreciated by parents and grandparents.

—Jerry Greif, Scotten Elementary, Grass Valley, CA

The MAILBOX® YEARBOOK

A Year's Worth Of Activities At Your Fingertips!



Instantly find that special activity or theme unit with The MAILBOX® YEARBOOK.

- **A COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION**
  - Includes 6 MAILBOX Magazines from AUG./SEPT. 1997 to JUNE/JULY 1998
- **FAVORITE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY CHAPTER**
- **EXTENSIVE CROSS-REFERENCED INDEX**
  - Literature units indexed by theme, author, and book title
  - Arts-and-crafts ideas indexed by theme and materials
- **EASY-TO-COPY PAGES** (lies flat)
- **HARDBOUND PERMANENT RESOURCE BOOK**
  - With 300+ pages

Available: **Back-To-School 1998**

Sold Out Every Year!

ORDER NOW! SUPPLIES ARE LIMITED

Your favorite MAILBOX® Magazine ideas today will be your favorite teaching reference for years to come!

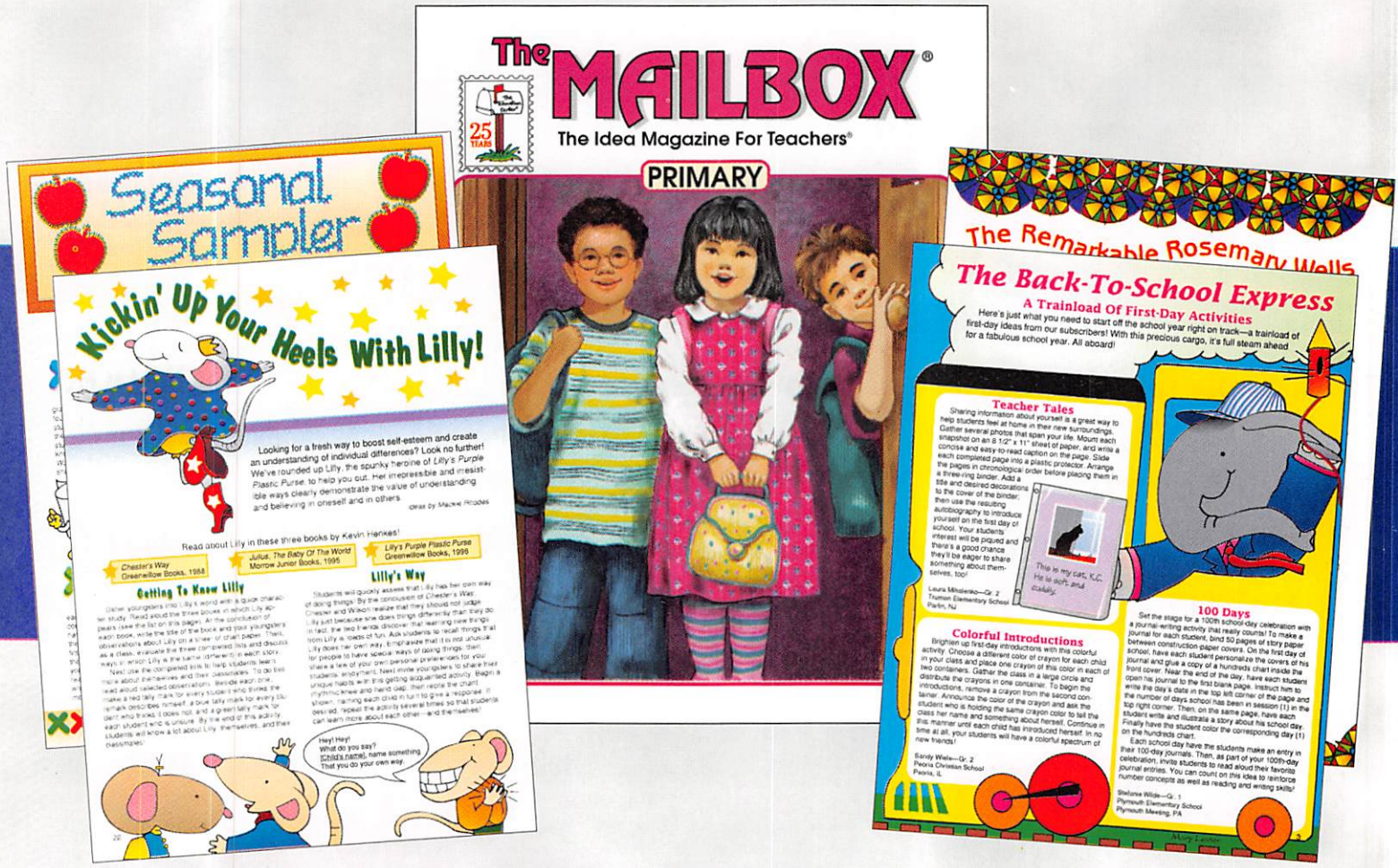
Order Your 1997–1998 Yearbook Today! 1-800-714-7991

Visit Us On the World Wide Web: www.themailbox.com

Monday–Friday 8 a.m.–6 p.m. ET • **SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!**

LKAA

The Mailbox®...
Ideas That Work For Teachers


The MAILBOX®
The Idea Magazine For Teachers®
PRIMARY
25 YEARS
Seasonal Sampler
Kickin' Up Your Heels With Lilly!
Looking for a fresh way to boost self-esteem and create an understanding of individual differences? Look no further! We've rounded up Lilly, the spunky heroine of Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, to help you out. Her irrepressible and irresistible ways clearly demonstrate the value of understanding and believing in oneself and in others.
Read about Lilly in these three books by Kevin Henkes!
Chester's Way Greenwillow Books, 1988
Julius, The Baby Of The World Morrow Junior Books, 1990
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse Greenwillow Books, 1996
Getting To Know Lilly
Lilly's Way
The Remarkable Rosemary Wells
The Back-To-School Express
A Trainload Of First-Day Activities
Here's just what you need to start off the school year right on track—a trainload of first-day ideas from our subscribers! With this precious cargo, it's full steam ahead for a fabulous school year. All aboard!
Teacher Tales
Colorful Introductions
100 Days

The Mailbox® provides you with creative teaching ideas and activities that you can use in your classroom. To help you meet the needs of your students, we publish *The Mailbox*® in four grade-specific editions:

- **Preschool (3- & 4-yr.-olds)**
- **Kindergarten**
- **Primary (Grades 1–3)**
- **Intermediate (Grades 4–6)**

The experienced teacher-writers at *The Mailbox*® understand the requirements and day-to-day challenges of teaching. Each issue is packed full of educationally sound and appropriate activities designed to challenge and motivate your students. You'll also get the latest ideas and advice from our nationwide network of classroom teachers.

Order America's #1 Teacher Magazine Today!

To subscribe, just return the postage-paid reply card or call toll-free

1-800-627-8579 • **Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–11 P.M. ET**

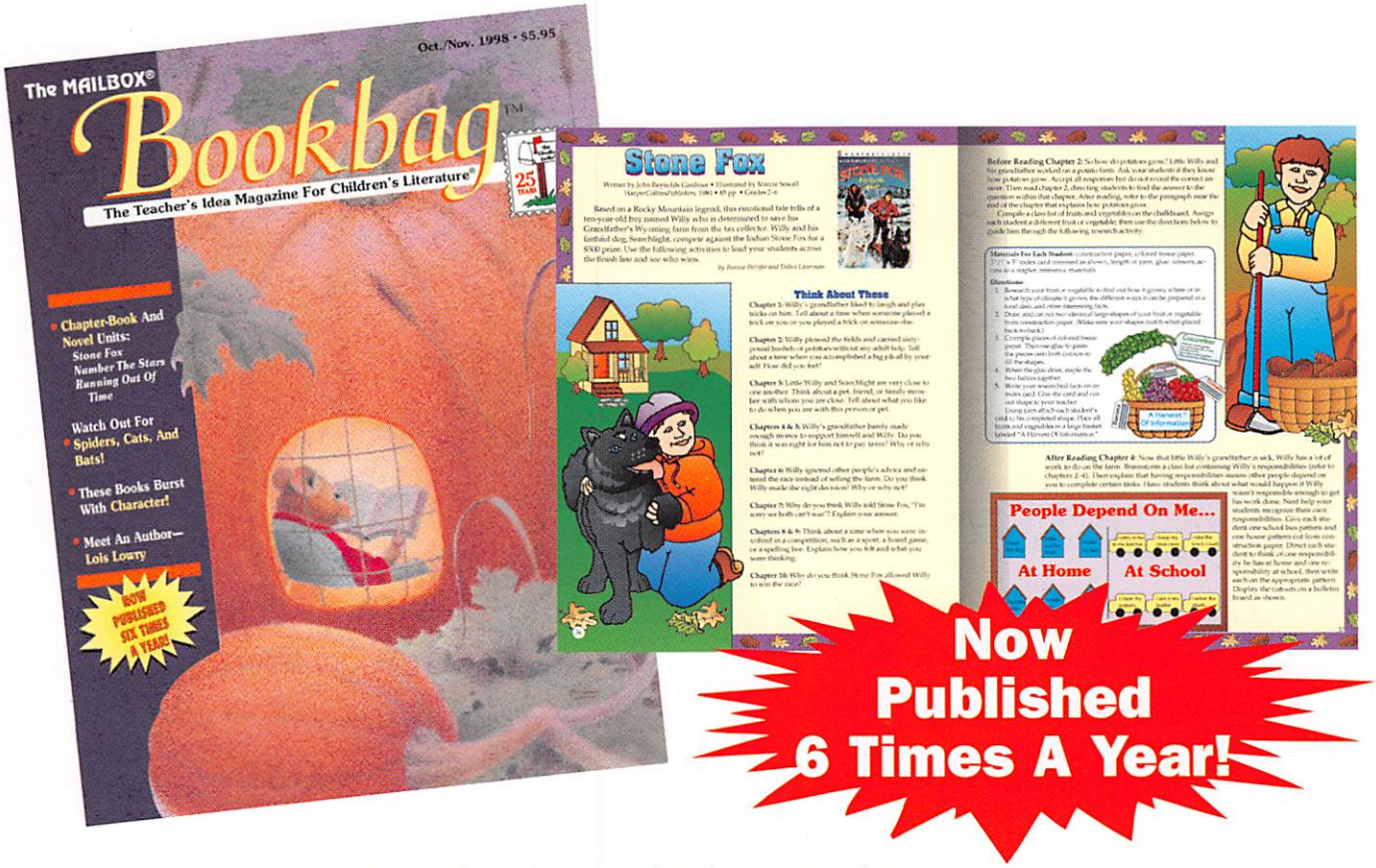
6 issues for $24.95

4LAH

All non-U.S. subscriptions, please add $9.00 postage and handling in U.S. funds. Please allow 6–8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Visit Us On The World Wide Web: www.themailbox.com or E-mail mailbox@theeducationcenter.com

If You Love Children's Literature… This Is The Magazine For You!


The MAILBOX®
Oct./Nov. 1998 • $5.95
Bookbag™
The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®
25 YEARS
• Chapter-Book And Novel Units: Stone Fox Number The Stars Running Out Of Time
• Watch Out For Spiders, Cats, And Bats!
• These Books Burst With Character!
• Meet An Author—Lois Lowry
NOW PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR!
Stone Fox
Think About These
People Depend On Me...
At Home
At School
Now Published 6 Times A Year!

Teacher-Tested Ideas And Activities.

- Six times a year means more teacher-tested ideas and children's literature units when you need them.
- Enrich all areas of your curriculum with inspiring, fun-filled thematic units and ideas from our nationwide network of teachers.
- Practical, ready-to-use activities to integrate classics, award winners, and newer books into your curriculum.
- Published by the editors of America's most popular teaching magazine, *The Mailbox®*. For grades 1–6.

The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®

The MAILBOX®
Bookbag™
The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®

Order *The Mailbox® BOOKBAG™* Today! $29.95 for 6 issues
Call Toll-Free 1-800-627-8579. Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–11 P.M. ET

All non-U.S. subscriptions please add $9.00 postage & handling in U.S. funds. *The Mailbox® BOOKBAG™* is published 6 times a year.
Please allow 8–10 week for delivery of your first issue.

The Education Center®
25 YEARS

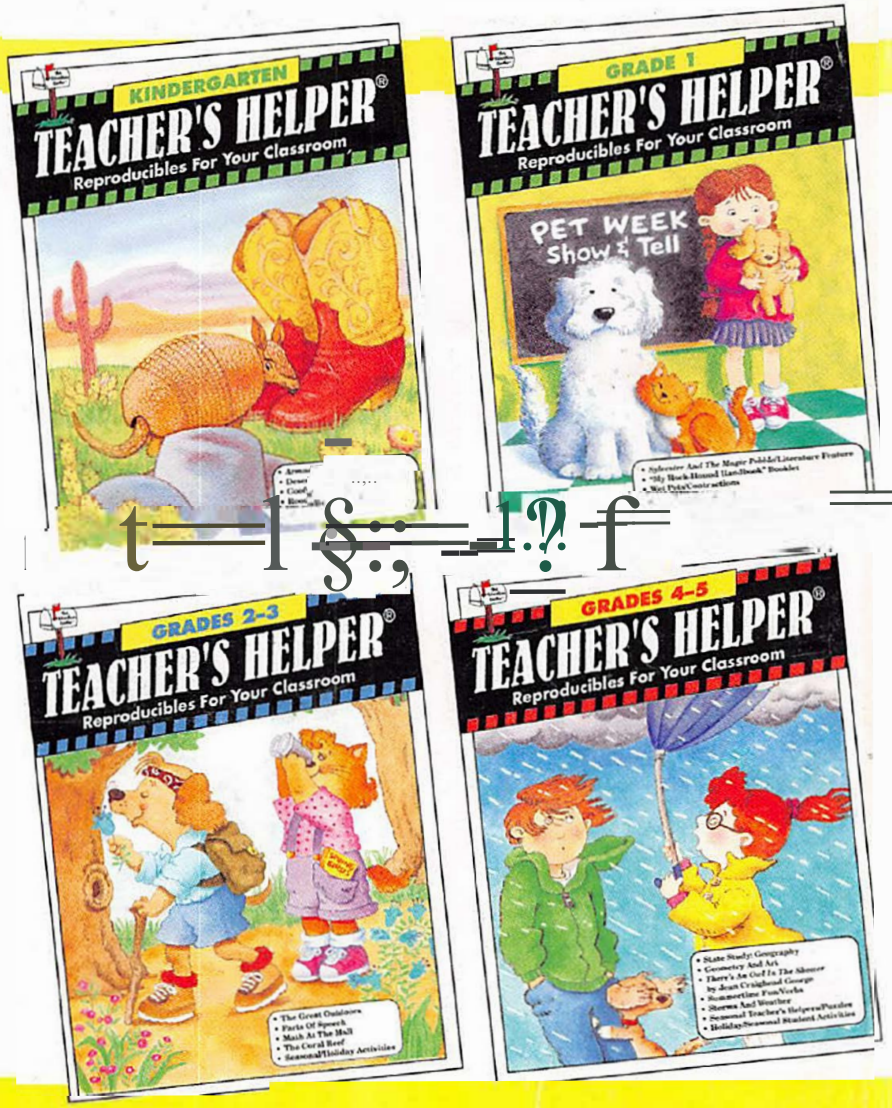
4LAH

Visit our Web site:
www.themailboxteacher.com

From Your Friends At *The MailboxID*

Skill-Based Reproducibles That Make Leaming Fun!

- **SAVES YOU TIME:** All units are perforated and ready to use with background information and extension activities.
- **FITS YOUR LESSON PLAN:** Teacher-tested reproducibles feature skills and themes taught and reinforced during Kindergarten through 5th grade levels:
  - Kindergarten
  - Grade 1
  - Grades 2-3
  - Grades 4-5
- **MOTUVATES YOUR STUDENTS:** More than traditional worksheets, these interesting activities and clever themes make learning fun-the proven way to motivate students.



To order, return the postage-paid reply card or call our toll-free number listed below.
4 issues for $16.95. 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed.

Subscribe Today! • 1-800-627-8579 MoN.-FRI. s A.M.-11 P.M. *u*

Visit Us On The World Wide Web: www.teachershelper.com E-mail: teachershelper@theeducationcenter.com
All non-U.S. subscriptions, please add $6.00 postage & handling in U.S. funds. Please allow S-10 weeks for delivery of your first issue. 4LAH